THE CHILDREN WHO FOLLOWED THE PIPER

By Padraic Colum

Illustrated by Dugald Stewart Walker

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THE CHILDREN WHO FOLLOWED THE PIPER

By PADRAIC COLUM

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THE CHILDREN WHO FOLLOWED THE PIPER

BY

PADRAIC COLUM

ILLUSTRATED BY
DUGALD WALKER

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1937

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Set up and electrotyped. Published September, 1922.
Reprinted July, 1923; April, 1924; May, 1926; May, 1928; December, 1930. May, 1933. August, 1935. June, 1937.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE FERRIS PRINTING COMPANY

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THE CHILDREN WHO FOLLOWED THE PIPER

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HOW THE PIED PIPER CAME

FIRST there were the rats: they came into the town in families, and each family went to live in a stable. From the stables they went into the cellars, and from the cellars they went into the kitchens; and from the kitchens they went into the parlors, and from the parlors they went into the bedrooms. Then they went into the town hall. Then they went into the churches. The cats they chased and the dogs they jeered at. They ate the bacon and the beans, the cheese and the custards. They squeaked under the beds and they climbed the ropes in the belfries; then they went to live in the ovens where the bread was

being baked. And one day, in his own home, a rat jumped out of the Mayor's pie dish.

That day, as he sat in the council room with the Aldermen beside him, the Mayor was told that there was a fellow outside who said he was come to help the Town Council.

"I hope he has something to do with banishing the rats," said the Mayor. "I must say that it is not worth while being Mayor while the rats are in this good town. I have had to keep my scarlet robe locked up in an iron chest for fear the rats would eat it."

"And we," said the Aldermen all, "have had to keep our embroidered waistcoats locked up in the same sort of iron chests."

"And we hope the fellow has something to do with banishing the rats," said all of them.

"The fellow is here," said the Sergeant.

He was there, sure enough, standing behind the Sergeant. "What an odd-looking fellow he is, to be sure," said the Town Council.

And an odd-looking fellow he certainly was!

He was dressed in reds and yellows, his right side and his left leg being in yellow, and his right leg and his left side being in red. He had on a round hat that had something like a goose's wing at each side of it. His face was soft and round, but his eyes were dark, and they had, if one looked close enough, a sort of command in them. He carried bagpipes.

"Did you ever see him before, Sergeant?" asked the Mayor.

"Never," said the Sergeant. "He seems to be only a sojourner here."

"And yet I have been a long time in the world," said the fellow.

"What name are you called by?" said the Mayor.

"One name and another," said the fellow, "but I doubt if you ever heard any of my names. You may call me the Pied Piper."

It was a good name to call him; he was a piper by the bagpipes he carried, and he was pied by the different colors he wore in his dress.

"To get to business," said the Mayor. "What can you do for us?"

"Banish the rats from your town," said the Piper.

"I have the mind of a prophet," said the Mayor to the Aldermen, "I knew he was going to say that."

"What will be your fee for the service?" said the Mayor.

"Will you give me fifty gulders?" said the Pied Piper.

It was then that the Treasury-Remembrancer came into the story. He was a thin-lipped man, and he wrote the sum down.

"Fifty gulders!" cried the Mayor. "Man, we'll give you a hundred and fifty!"

But the thin-lipped man who was the Treasury-Remembrancer did not write that sum down.

"Then," said the Pied Piper, "stand at the windows of the council room to-morrow when the clocks are striking noon and you shall see me banish the rats from your good town."

Out he went then. Well, the next day, as the clocks of the town were striking noon, the Mayor and the Aldermen stood at the windows of the council room. The Piper came into the market place, right side and left leg yellow, left side and right leg red. He put the pipe to his mouth, and his elbow to the bag, and he played away. Rats were biting each other in the gutters. Up they sat and cocked an ear to the music. Rats were hurrying home with cheese in their mouths or an egg between their paws. They stopped to listen. Then rats came pouring down steps of houses; rats came swarming up steps of cellars; rats came scrambling over walls. Rats by the thousand showed themselves, and they all went hurrying toward where the Pied Piper played.

With his elbow to the bag and the pipe to his mouth the Pied Piper moved off. He went down the street, and as he went the rats followed him, tumbling over each other, squealing and squeaking. Down to the river the Piper went, and squealing and squeaking the rats followed after.

Across the stepping-stones in the river the Piper went. The rats followed. He reached the other bank, but they did not. Those behind crowded on those before, and tumbling and turning, squealing and squeaking, they were all swept down the river; some were drowned here, some were drowned there, but all were drowned somewhere.

So much for the rats. The people of the town hardly knew their houses for a while after. No rat ran across the floor and no rat squeaked in the passageway. The food came from the larders untouched, and was eaten off the tables without the rats putting nose or paw on it. The cats showed themselves again. And the good people walked their streets again without the rats brushing against them. They met the dogs, and the dogs wagged their tails as if to say, "We have got rid of those fellows, haven't we, masters?"

The Mayor and the Aldermen sat in their council room; the Mayor had on his scarlet robe

and his chain of gold, and the Aldermen had on their embroidered waistcoats. Being in such grandeur themselves they looked with disdain upon the fellow who stood before them, dressed in reds and yellows, with a bagpipe slung across his back and a staff in his hands.

"You needn't have come," said the Mayor. "We would have sent for you, you know."

"And we're very deep in the town's business," said the first of the Aldermen.

When that was said they all expected that the Piper would make his bow and take his leave. Instead of doing that he came right up to the council table.

"I've come for my reward," said he.

The Mayor looked at him as if he expected that the Piper would hold his hat out for such silver as they might be pleased to bestow on him, but the fellow kept the round hat with the goose wings still upon his head.

"I've come for my hundred and fifty gulders," said he.

"He asked for fifty," said the Treasury-Remembrancer, with his mouth pursed up.

"But you offered me a hundred and fifty," said the Piper.

"Fifty is all that's written down," said the Treasury-Remembrancer.

"And you'll have to be reasonable," said the Mayor. "I'll admit that you've done your work pretty well, but piping's all in your day's work, you know, and you can't make us believe that you strike a hundred and fifty good golden gulders every day. No, you can't make us believe that. And what would you do with it? Buy a new breeches for yourself? No, no, the town can't afford to keep you as fine as all that, my good man. Hold out your hat now and I'll give you fifty out of my own private cash box."

"Give me my hundred and fifty gulders and let me go on my way," said the Piper, "for, believe me, there's something in your town I don't relish."

"I beg to make it known to the honorable

Town Council that this man's an alien, and that he cannot maintain a claim against Your Worships," said the thin-lipped Treasury-Remembrancer at the other side of the table.

"Here's the fifty gulders in a bag," said the Mayor, "and the Sergeant has my orders to show you the way to an eating house where you can have a meal at our expense," said the Mayor. "And we're very busy at this time o' the day."

But the Piper had gone past the Sergeant. He went out and he did not come back for the fifty gulders that lay on the table.

And what did he do after that? All in his reds and yellows he stood in the market place on that spring day. He put the pipe to his mouth and he put his elbow to the bag and he began to play. At the first sound of his pipes the children ran out of the houses—children capped and bareheaded, children barefooted and shod. Boys and girls they came, rich men's, poor men's, tinker's, tailor's, soldier's, sailor's children. "A nice thing, to be sure," said the Aldermen who

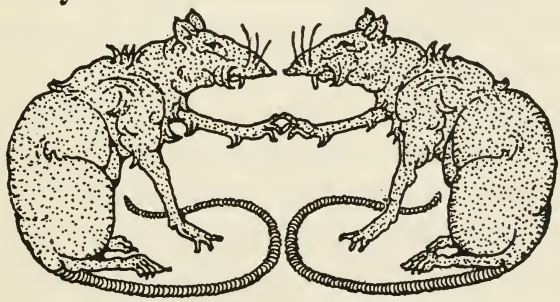
watched from the window in the council room. "A nice thing that our children should be gathered around that fellow. Send for the Beadle, and let him take the children away."

But it wasn't the Beadle who took them away. The Piper turned and went down the street and the children went dancing after him. More and more children ran out of the houses and came crowding up the side streets as he went by. Ragged and well-dressed they followed the Piper, and the elders stood by to watch the procession. Over the bridge they went and up toward the mountain that looked over the town. The Beadle had been summoned; he went after the children. Men and women joined him and they went hallooing to them to stop. But the Piper went on and the children went on. Surely they would stop and turn back when they came to the great rock that stood in their path on the mountain. But they did not turn back. The Beadle and the men and women saw the rock move and saw the Piper and the chil-

dren pass behind the rock. But when they went up to the place the rock was where it had been, and the children were not to be seen high up or low down.

The rock had moved to let the Piper and the children through—that was plain to be seen—but there was no way of making the rock move again. The people tried and tried, and for days and nights they stayed beside the rock. No sound or sign of the children came to them. The Pied Piper had gone, and the town's children had gone with him.

All this is known to all of you, but it is right for me to say that this is only the beginning of my story.



THE WAY THE CHILDREN WENT

THE Piper made the rock turn as if it were on a hinge by playing a special tune before it. When he was far inside with the children crowding behind him he played another tune that made the rock close like a door. Past the rock they were in a great cave, and cave after cave opened before them. The Piper played, and a light came out of the pipes he held.

And what did he play to them? Well, the children thought that his music was telling them about a story that they knew. It was a story about Reynard the Fox. Oh, more delightfully than ever they had heard it before

the music told them this part of the story—how the Ram and the Hare went to Malpardus, Reynard's castle. They were to bring Reynard to the court of His Majesty the Lion. Ah, it would be bad for Reynard when he came before the Lion! He would be made to suffer for all his villainies. But the Fox played tricks upon the Ram and the Hare, and he kept away from the Lion's court. Oh, wasn't he clever! As the Pied Piper played, it seemed to the children that a little red fox ran beside him, playing and dancing and jumping.

When he had finished that tune he played it for them all over again. And then he played it again and again. Each time he played it, it seemed to the children to be more delightful than when he had played it before. On and on they went, following the music of the pipes and the light that shone out of them. Through cave after cave they went. Passages went up and passages went down, and passages wound around and about. But through all the passages they

went, and they were so entranced with the Piper's playing that they did not know that they had left the light of the sun.

And by that time the Mayor and the Council knew that they had made a great mistake in treating the Pied Piper the way they had done. Perhaps if they had known who he was they would not have treated him in such a fashion. I do not know. They might not have believed him if he had told them.

For he was the one who, born at dawn, made himself a musical instrument at noon—the first earthly musical instrument that was ever made —and in the evening went out of his mother's house and stole Apollo's cattle. He was the one who was called the Bringer of Dreams, the Watcher by Night, the Thief at the Gate. He was the one who had once possessed the Shoes of Swiftness and the Winged Hat. He was Hermes, who was also called Mercury.

But the Mayor and the Town Council might not have believed him if he had told them this.

These were the children who followed the Piper: Robin and Richard and Nancy; Jack and Jill and Wee Willie Winkie; Jack Sprat, Jack Snipe, and Jack Horner, and Jumping Joan, the showman's daughter; Perrie, Merrie, and Dixie; Margery Daw and Little Jack Straw; Elizabeth, Betsy, Betty, and Bess; Tom Tucker, Tom-Tom, the piper's son, Jack Nicker, Dorothy, and Ursula.

Mary-Mary, quite contrary, left her garden to go; Simple Simon just turned round and followed the music although the pieman was there to talk to; Johnny-Jump-Up, the son of the man who ate fire in the market place on Thursdays, went with Philomena, who was so proud because she was the countess's daughter, and Meg, the little ragpicker, and the baker's thirteen children, boys and girls, and Angelus, who rang the church bells, and Angelica, his sister.

And besides these there went three children who were just as nice as any of the others. Golden Hood I'll name first. She was the milk-

woman's child. Then there was John Ball, the Miller's son, and Valentine, the son of the Emperor. These three children went together.

Valentine, the Emperor's son, did not belong to the town; he was from a very great city indeed. But he happened to be there, and he was standing with his hand upon the neck of his white, caparisoned steed, and all dressed in his velvets, when he heard the music. He followed, going beside John Ball and little Golden Hood.

They went on together, hearing about the Ram and the Hare and the castle of Malpardus.

Then John Ball heard something that nobody else seemed to hear. He heard something behind them coming clump, clump, clump. He stopped and he looked back through the dark passage. Could that be old Baldwin, the mill horse, coming behind?

He heard the clumping, clumping, clumping, coming up to him. Indeed it was a horse that was coming. And John Ball remembered that

Valentine, the Emperor's Son.

as they had come near the great stone on the mountainside he had seen the old mill horse standing near.

The horse came up beside him and stood there in the dark. It was old Baldwin who drew sacks to and from the mill. John Ball put his hand upon the horse, and he found the hide all covered with flour and grain that he used to carry.

He was glad that Baldwin had come, and he did not know how it had happened. But Baldwin had just followed the children. He was in the first cave when the rock closed behind them. He stayed for a while in the dark, and then he went clumping, clumping, after the children.

The music was going farther and farther away from them now. John Ball hurried on, with Baldwin keeping beside him. Then he saw a light like a star before them. It grew wider and wider. There was sunlight and a wind blowing. There were trees. He heard the pipes playing in the open air as he came to the open-

ing. Trees were growing outside, a whole forest of trees.

John Ball stood with Baldwin at the mouth of a cave on a mountainside. He heard the sound of pipes going amongst the trees; he saw the dresses of some of the children who followed the Piper. He stood by the side of the horse as he had often stood by him. And Baldwin, with his hide gray with the flour and the wheat that he used to carry to and from the mill, looked at him in the same friendly way. Then John Ball, the Miller's son, put his hand upon the horse's mane, and they went down the side of the hill and into the forest where the Piper and the children had gone.

THE WOOD OF DAYLIGHT-GONE

THEY were not in a great forest when they came down the mountainside. They were in a wood where ash trees grew and bushy white-thorn trees. There was a silence there as if there was a great forest all around. It was evening, the children thought, but a very bright and clear evening. There was just one star in the sky, and it looked as if somebody was dangling it at the end of a string and would draw it up again.

The Piper was not playing now; he walked along through the trees and the children followed him—all the children except John Ball, and he was standing on the mountainside at the

time, with Baldwin, the old mill horse, beside him.

A man came toward them. He was a black-bearded man, tremendously tall and tremendously broad, with a nose that came very far out on his face. He carried a spear across his shoulder, and from the spear a dead wolf was hanging. As the man came near he said to the Piper: "Mercury, art thou back?" "Yea, Mars, I am back," said the Piper, "and now I shall draw the wolves away." "Leave me the wolves," said the black-bearded man, in a deep voice, "leave me the wolves," and he passed them, and went on through the trees.

And then a bird, a woodpecker with brown wings and a red cap, flew up on a branch and looked down at them. "Mercury, art thou back?" said the woodpecker. "I am back, Picus," said the Pied Piper.

They went on, and they saw an old man seated in a doorway—there was no house there, only a doorway. He had white hair and a white beard. As they came near, he said: "Mercury, Mercury,

art thou back?" "Yea, Janus, I am back," said the Piper. They passed, and when the children looked back they saw Old Janus in his doorway still looking at them, although they were sure that he had not turned. He had two faces, one that looked before and the other that looked behind him, but the children did not then know that about Old Janus.

Then they heard voices that said: "Mercury has come back, Mercury has come back." The voices seemed to come from many places in the trees. The Piper stopped and called out, "Faunus!" Then a man showed himself. He was stout, but not very tall; he had a ruddy face, and bright eyes, and brown hair that grew over his forehead and down to his ears like a cap. It was his voice that sounded amongst the trees as if many voices were speaking.

The children were in a place that nobody had ever told them anything about. They were in the Wood of Daylight-Gone. To that wood had gone the gods of the old time after they had lost

their place in the world. Not all the gods, however. The greater gods would not live there, and they had gone to a place that children might not go to.

And the Pied Piper, who was Mercury, and who at first had been called Hermes, went on through the wood, not playing on his pipes now, and the children followed him. They came to where there was a white-thorn tree and a spring well. There was a house before the spring and the white-thorn tree, a little house that was covered, walls and roof, with thick creepers. The Piper stood before the little house, and he called out, "Baucis, art thou at home?" And then he called out, "Philemon, come out to us." An old goose came from behind the house; it stretched out its neck and looked at all of them. Then the goose stepped into the house, and in a while afterward an old woman came out to them.

OLD COUPLE'S HOUSE

THIS was Old Couple's House, the Piper told the children. Once, long and long ago, before the gods had lost their high places, Jupiter and Mercury went through the world. They seemed poor and hungry men going to different houses for food and shelter. As they went through the world they were made sad and angry because of the hard-heartedness of men; every house of the thousand houses they came to turned them away.

At last they came to a very little house; it was the poorest of all the houses they had been near; there was a little garden beside it, with cabbages and a few fruit trees, and there was a

goose, and that goose was all there was of live stock about the place. There was no watchdog, either, and the goose stood before the house and cackled to let the people within know that strangers were coming.

But poor as it was the gods were made welcome to that house. An old woman stood at the doorway and asked them to enter. They stooped their heads to pass under that doorway. Then the old woman lighted a fire with twigs and split wood, and blew and blew at it until the fire blazed up on the hearth.

There was a couch there made of woven willow rods. When she saw the strangers standing on her floor the old woman—Baucis was her name—put a mattress filled with sedge grass, soft and dry, upon it, and asked them to seat themselves. The couch took up the whole side of the house.

Then the old man, Philemon, came in, carrying the cabbages that he had cut in the garden when he saw the strangers coming. He cut and

cleaned the cabbages and put them in the pot to boil. Then he looked at the old woman and she nodded to him, and he took down the small piece of bacon that hung from the rafter and he put it in to boil with the cabbages.

And while the pot was boiling the old man and the old woman, Philemon and Baucis, kept telling the strangers they were welcome. The old woman tucked up her skirt and made the table ready for the meal. One leg of the table was short, and Baucis put a piece of a broken jar between this leg and the earthen floor, propping it in this way. Then she asked the guests to bring their couch over to the table.

The only two earthen dishes that the couple had were upon the table, and on these dishes the old woman had put olives and cherries and cheese and eggs that had been toasted in the ashes. And while the guests were eating these good things the old man brought the cabbage and the bacon to them on wooden platters.

Then the old man looked at the old woman and

she nodded to him, and he went to a jar that was in the corner, and he took it up and shook it to see what it held. There was something in it, and he took an earthen pitcher and he poured what was in the jar into the pitcher. There was wine in it, but not very much. Philemon looked into the pitcher he had poured the wine into and saw that it was half filled. There would be a bowlful for each of the guests, he thought.

And while they were eating the old woman was emptying her cupboard to provide another course for them. She filled a shallow basket with nuts and apples and grapes that had just been gathered off the vine outside. She put into the basket, too, a loaf that only one slice had been cut off, and a piece of clear honey laid upon a green leaf.

Baucis and Philemon stood near the table and talked with their guests. Their kindly faces showed how glad they were that they had been able to furnish for them a meal that was well relished. Philemon had left bowls upon the

table—two beechen bowls that were coated on the inside with yellow wax. He saw the guests fill the bowls from the pitcher and then drink the wine.

But oh, how sorry he was made to feel when he saw one of the guests reach over for the pitcher again. He wanted to tell him that there was no more wine in it. But he felt so ashamed that the words would not come out of his throat. The guest poured wine into the bowl. He filled it up again. He passed the pitcher to the other guest, and he, too, filled up his bowl with wine.

Philemon was greatly pleased that there had been more in the pitcher than he had imagined. And all this time old Baucis was watching anxiously the basket that she had put the fruit and the bread and honey in.

For each time the guests reached over to it she feared that they would find nothing there, and that she would be made ashamed that her cupboard had had no better supply. But every time that one of the guests put his hand into

the basket he brought something out—an apple or a handful of nuts or a slice of bread; often they drew the piece of honey out to put some upon the bread; she thought it had all been used, but when she looked at it she thought there was as much there as when she had brought it out of the cupboard.

Philemon saw one of the guests reach out for the pitcher again. "Sir," said Philemon to him, but he said no more, for his mouth remained open when he saw that the guest was able to fill his own and the other's bowl. Then the guest looked round and saw Philemon's face, and he smiled at him. He offered the bowl to Philemon and he begged him to drink.

"How can I drink it when there is so little left for you who are my guests?" said Philemon. But still his guest smiled at him. He pointed to the pitcher. Philemon looked into it—he saw that it was half filled as when he had emptied the jar into it.

Philemon, without being able to speak, looked

into the pitcher. He saw the wine bubbling within it, as if it were rising up out of a spring. Just then the other guest had offered an apple to Baucis. She shook her head, thinking as Philemon had said. But the guest pointed to the basket, and when Baucis looked into it she thought there were as many apples and nuts and grapes and slices of bread and as much honey as when she had taken all these out of the cupboard.

Philemon took the cup of wine, and Baucis took the apple that was offered. They tasted what they had taken, and they knew that neither their wine nor their apples had such savor. They looked upon their guests, and they saw the majesty that was in the face of one and the all-knowingness that was in the face of the other; and they knew that they had for guests two of the gods.

Philemon would have knelt down before them but Baucis plucked at him; her thought was that they should prepare another and a better meal

for their divine guests. The old man and the old woman slipped out of the house. Then Jupiter and Mercury, seated upon the couch of woven willows, laughed to themselves, for they knew what was about to happen.

Baucis would sacrifice the goose, their watcher, and the only thing in live stock that they had, to make a supper for the gods. She and Philemon came to where the goose stood. But the goose, when it saw them, shook out its wings and fled. After the goose went Baucis and Philemon. Here and there the goose ran, with neck and wings stretched out, and the old pair could not overtake it. They chased it up and down, and at last the goose ran into the house. When the couple came in they found the goose with its neck upon Jupiter's knees. Then the god held out his hands to Baucis and Philemon, and begged them to spare the creature that had come to him to crave protection.

Philemon and Baucis knelt before the gods. Jupiter raised them up, saying to them: "In

They found the goose with its neck upon Jupiter's knees.

all the country that we have come through we found two only kind to strangers—you two, Baucis and Philemon. Ask now a boon from us. Whatsoever you ask now the gods will grant you."

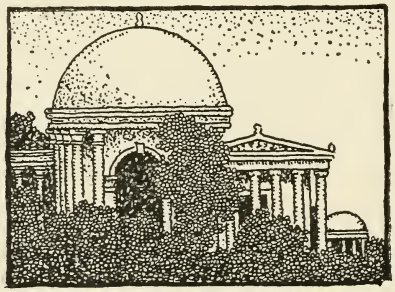
Then Baucis and Philemon both asked for the same thing—that they might be left together, and that neither one should ever come to look upon the tomb of the other. This the gods granted to them. One day they would die, but when that day came they would both pass away at the same instant.

Jupiter and Mercury left their powers in the pitcher and in the basket. Whatever was poured into the pitcher, whether wine or milk or water, would keep welling up, and would be always at the same level, no matter how much was poured out of it. And no matter what was taken out of the basket, whether bread or fruit or honey, it would always remain filled with the same things.

And the gods also changed the house of Baucis and Philemon. That house that was made of

woven wattles thatched with reeds, they changed into a house of marble with a golden roof. For long and long that house shone there in its marble and gold. But then creepers began to cover the marble walls and grow over the golden roof. Now the creepers were a foot thick, and walls and roof were covered with them.

But Baucis and Philemon and the old goose still lived there, and the garden still had cabbages, and apples and nuts grew on the trees, and there was a spring of water beside the house, and a white-thorn tree before the door to keep ill luck away.



THE DEEP WOOD AND THE DARK FOREST

IN that very place the children stayed. They were counting who had come and who had not come, when John Ball came up to them, mounted on old Baldwin. The children shouted for John Ball, and shouted for Baldwin, the old mill horse.

The Piper had gone. They looked around and around the white-thorn bush, but they could not find him. The Pied Piper had gone without making a sound on his pipes.

Three by three, then, they went into the House of the Old Couple. The house could not hold more than three of them at a time. They drank and they ate out of the never-emptied measures

—milk out of the pitcher, bread and honey, nuts and apples and grapes out of the basket that the old woman set before them. Each of the children wanted to be beside John Ball who had ridden old Baldwin, but John Ball and Valentine and Golden Hood stayed always together.

Then, out under the great ash trees, the children played. There was that sort of light there that there is before children are called home. And the light did not change. It was no darker than it had been when they came down the mountainside; the star that was in the sky then still dangled there, and there was no other star.

After they had played the children lay under the trees and slept. It did not become any colder. When they wakened up the same light was in the sky, and the same star hung dangling there. And it was always the same.

About where they were was a silence like the silence of a great forest. Old Philemon, leaning on his staff, told them of the forest that grew down from the side of the mountain and closed

round the Wood of Daylight-Gone. It was called the Dark Forest. No one knew what beings were in it. And between the Wood of Daylight-Gone and the Dark Forest was the Deep Wood. In the Deep Wood were dwarfs and wild creatures.

When Philemon spoke of the Dark Forest, Golden Hood said, "If I went into it, should I ever see you two again?"

"If you went into it, Golden Hood," said Valentine, "I should follow and bring you back."

"And if Golden Hood and you, Valentine, went into the Dark Forest, I should go seeking you, day after day," said John Ball, the Miller's son. They said no more about the Dark Forest. With the other children they played under the great ash trees and beside the bushy white-thorn trees in the Wood of Daylight-Gone.

Johnny-Jump-Up and Jumping Joan, the showman's daughter, and Meg, the little rag-picker, and Philomena, the countess's child,

went from the great ash trees and the bushy white-thorn trees. They went amongst the tall pine trees and the dark spruce trees. They went picking berries and eating them. Little Meg gathered ragweed; she pulled the ragweed into shreds, and she threw the shreds upon the ground.

They were in the Deep Wood. They went on, gathering berries, until they came to an open space. There they saw four great trees, and each tree had a hollow, wide and deep. "Oh, let us sit down in the hollows and eat our berries there—I'm sure the hollows are nice and clean," said Philomena.

So each went into the hollow in a tree. Very surprised were they to find a table and a chair and a bed in each of the hollows. They sat down at the tables and began eating their berries.

And there they were, eating their berries, when a dwarf came to the opening of each hollow. "Ha," said each of them, "who is this that has come into the tree dwarf's hollow house?"

Jumping Joan tumbled head over heels.

And saying this, each one raised up what he held in his hands—a little bronze axe.

"They came in without asking permission, and they will have to serve us," said one of the dwarfs.

"We will make them go down into the well and bring up the witch's spindle to us," said another of the dwarfs.

"Yes, yes," said all of them together, "we will make them bring up to us the witch's sharp-pointed spindle."

They took the children to the well, and they showed them, deep down in the bottom of it, the witch's sharp-pointed spindle. "Go now and bring us the spindle," said the dwarfs, "and whoever fails to bring it to us we will cut off their hands with our sharp axes. This one must be the first to go down."

As they said this, Jumping Joan tumbled head over heels, and so amazed were the dwarfs to see her do this that they ran back to their tree hollows. And when they were coming near the

children again, with axes raised and frowns upon their faces, Johnny-Jump-Up swung himself up a tree and flung pine cones at them. Little Meg, the ragpicker, ran away, but Philomena, the countess's daughter, sat down on the ground and began to cry.

Jumping Joan dragged her away to where Meg was hiding under a bush; Johnny-Jump-Up, swinging from branch to branch, came to them. The dwarfs followed them with their axes in their hands, shouting out, "We will chase you into the Dark Forest, we will chase you into the Dark Forest if you don't come back to us." Philomena wept more and more at the thought of the Dark Forest.

And they would have been lost in the Deep Wood, and they would have had to come back to the dwarfs or stray into the Dark Forest if Meg, the little ragpicker, had not done what she had done as they were coming through the wood. She had plucked ragweed and she had pulled it to shreds and she had thrown the shreds

upon the ground. There were the shreds beside the bush where she was hiding, and Meg followed them, calling to the others. In and out amongst the trees they ran, following the shreds of ragweed, and with the dwarfs behind them shouting and striking the trees with their axes. On and on the children went, until they came to where the ash trees and the bushy white-thorn trees were. The tree dwarfs came no farther.

There the children sat down, and they all wept except Johnny-Jump-Up. They heard the voices of the other children playing, and they went toward Old Couple's House in the Wood of Daylight-Gone.

IN THE DEEP WOOD AGAIN

MARY-MARY, quite contrary, went all by herself into the Deep Wood. She saw a drift of snow under a tree; she saw a patch of red berries upon the snow, and she saw a black, black raven standing on the snow and pecking at the red berries. And never since one day in her garden when the red peonies leaned over the whitewashed steps, and the black cat lay sunning herself upon them, had Mary seen a sight that was so well worth beholding.

So she stood beside the tree, watching the snow and the berries and the raven. And then

she heard some one say, "What are you looking at, little girl?"

She saw who spoke to her. There was a hag within the hollow of the tree; she was leaning on a staff, and with her gleaming eyes she was looking out on the wood. "And what are you looking at, little girl?" said the Hag of the Tree to Mary.

"I am looking at the whiteness of the snow and the redness of the berries and the blackness of the raven, please, ma'am," said Mary.

"And did you ever see anything that drew your eyes more than this blackness and whiteness and redness? Tell me that!" said the hag.

"No, ma'am," said Mary, and she tried to draw away, for she was fearful of the strange hag that stayed there all alone in the Deep Wood. The hag's eyes held her, and she could not go away.

"Did you ever see any one who had the whiteness of the snow and the redness of the berries and the blackness of the raven? Tell me that!"

said the hag, lifting her head above her staff and fixing her eyes upon Mary.

"Yes, ma'am, I saw such a one," said Mary.

"Who is she? Who is she?" said the hag.

"Golden Hood has the whiteness of the snow and the redness of the berries and the blackness of the raven," said Mary.

"Golden Hood has—has she?" cried the hag, and it seemed to Mary that she was about to jump out of the hollow of the tree. She was greatly afraid.

"Yes, Golden Hood has," said Mary, trying to get herself away.

"Oh, my dear little girl," said the hag, "don't try to go from me. Remember that you are very close to the Dark Forest and you might stray into it, and then what would become of you? Oh, my dear little girl, stay here until you do something for me."

Then the raven that was pecking at the berries flew up on her shoulder, and he looked at Mary with a very wicked eye.

"Oh, what would you have me do for you?" said Mary, beginning to cry.

"Nothing, nothing very much, child. There is an old thorn bush behind this tree of mine. Tell me, do you see it?"

"I see it," said Mary.

"There's a long thorn upon it. Tell me, do you see it?"

"I see it," said Mary.

"Break off that thorn and bring it to me here," said the hag, striking the hollow of the tree with her staff.

Mary went to the thorn bush. Mary looked and saw the long thorn growing there. And then, just behind the thorn bush she saw Tom-Tom, the piper's son.

"Run, run," said Tom.

"Oh, where can I run to?" cried Mary.

"After me," said Tom.

"Oh, but mustn't I break off the thorn?" said Mary.

"I'm going to run," said Tom. So Tom

started to run, and Mary wanted to cry, seeing him go off like that. Then she started to run, and the raven on her shoulder pinched and pecked at her. She heard the hag shouting, "Bring me the thorn, the thorn that will put her sleeping." But Mary ran on, and Tom-Tom, the piper's son, ran before her.

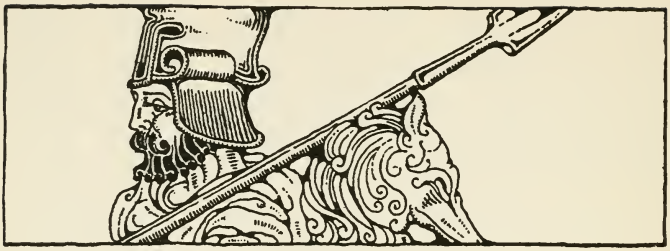
They ran until they came to the edge of the Deep Wood. Just beyond the edge were Perrie and Merrie, Wee Willie Winkie, and the baker's thirteen children, boys and girls. They were all playing with old Baldwin, John Ball's horse.

Mary was shrieking and shrieking because the raven that stayed on her shoulder was pinching and pecking at her.

But as soon as she came to the first white-thorn tree, planted there for good luck, the raven flew away.

Then the children went on to Old Couple's House. They saw Golden Hood with Valentine

and John Ball. Golden Hood was gathering crocuses, but Valentine and John Ball were listening to the voices of Faunus that came to them from amongst the trees.



THE CHILDREN AND THE GODS OF OLD TIME

THE voices were telling Valentine and John Ball that in the Wood of Daylight-Gone there would be never a change; the voices were telling them that those who had come there would be ever the same; the voices were telling them that the children who followed the Piper would be children always. Then John Ball and Valentine said, "Will we be children always and ever?"

The voices that Faunus spoke with said: "Unless you go out of the Wood of Daylight-Gone you will be children always."

A great sadness came over Valentine and over

John Ball when they heard this said. Would they never, then, come to the fullness of their height and their strength? The sense of a great, great loss came over them. All they had done and all they had ever known, they thought, was as nothing to what was being taken from them.

And then the voices ceased to come from the trees, and the two boys stood there feeling lonely and lost. They saw the same star dangling in the sky that had been there when they had first come into the wood. Never, never, as men grown tall and strong would they look on that star. And when that thought came into their minds they looked all around them.

Where could they go? Beyond the ash trees and the white-thorn trees there was the Deep Wood, and beyond the Deep Wood there was the Dark Forest. Could they go through the Dark Forest and out into the world, they wondered.

They went toward where the Deep Wood began. Their way went past where Old Janus sat. He was in a doorway to which there was

no house. One went before one of his faces and the other went before the other, and each of the boys said to him: "What way is there to go from the Wood of Daylight-Gone and into the world?"

"It is long since I opened any way," Janus said, his two faces speaking at once. "I can open no way for you."

Janus with his white beards looked so wise to them that the thought that he could not show them a way made them feel more lonely and more lost. They went on. Then they met a man taller and broader than any man they had ever known; he was carrying a spear upon his shoulder from which a dead wolf hung. This was Mars. They spoke to him and said:

"Tell us, you who go into the woods killing wolves, how we may come out of the Wood of Daylight-Gone."

Mars went marching past them. "What battles would you fight?" said he as he went.

"No battles, Mars."

"I cannot look to find you a way," said Mars.

They went on until they came to the edge of the wood. There, gathering nuts and putting them into a bag, was another of the gods of the old time. He was Silvanus. "Silvanus, Silvanus," cried the boys, "can we, the Children who followed the Piper, ever find our way out of the Wood of Daylight-Gone?"

Silvanus, a young man with a ruddy face and strong arms, put down the bag of nuts and looked at the boys. He was one who was always busy; they had often seen him there, pruning the wild cherries or training the wild raspberry bushes.

"Is there a way out of the Wood of Daylight-Gone, Silvanus?" Valentine asked.

"There is one who can show the way," said Silvanus. As he spoke Picus, the restless woodpecker, came upon a branch and bent his head to listen to what Silvanus said.

"Who is the one who can show us the way out?"

"Circe the Enchantress," said Silvanus.

"Circe, Circe," cried Picus the Woodpecker, running around the tree.

"But you cannot go to Circe the Enchantress until you have been through the Dark Forest," said Silvanus.

"We have heard Philemon and Baucis say that no one has gone through the Dark Forest," said Valentine and John Ball, "and so we cannot go to Circe."

"You cannot go to Circe," said Silvanus. "But she is the only one who can tell you of the way out of the Wood of Daylight-Gone."

"Circe, Circe," cried Picus the Woodpecker, and he flew away.

They peered into the Deep Wood, but they saw no path there that they might follow. And then, feeling more lost and more lonely than when Faunus had spoken to them, they went back toward the Old Couple's House. They saw Golden Hood. "Oh, Golden Hood," said Valentine, "we will be here always, and you will be here always, and we will be children always.

Faunus has told it to us. You are a girl and so you do not mind being a child for ever, but we are sorry—sorry for ourselves." Golden Hood took a hand of each and went with them toward the tree that was before the house of the Old Couple.

Jack Sprat, Jack Snipe, and Jack Horner were sent to Old Janus where he sat in his doorway, to ask him to come to supper at the Old Couple's House; Jack and Jill, Jumping Joan, and Jack Nicker went with them. Perrie and Merrie and Dixie were sent to ask Faunus. The baker's thirteen children, boys and girls, went to Silvanus, and the rest of the children, with Golden Hood, went amongst the trees to find Picus the Woodpecker. Baucis and Philemon wanted Valentine and John Ball to fetch Mars, but the two boys sat there, sad and lonely, not harkening to what was said to them.

Then the Jacks with Jill and Joan (they were all sent to him because their names began with

J) brought Janus in. He was the first, because, of course, Janus had to open everything. Then Silvanus came, talking to the children who had brought him, and carrying his bag of nuts. Faunus came too, and he sat under a tree; and he frightened everybody by making his voices sound like the howling of wolves coming nearer, nearer. Then Picus the Woodpecker came flying from branch to branch, and, the children all having come back, the things to eat were spread out.

No one had gone to fetch him, but Mars came. He had his spear, with the wolf he had just killed dangling at the end of it. He threw the wolf down when he came near where they were all sitting. They were under great ash trees, before the house and close to the spring well. All were there except Picus the Woodpecker. He went running around the trees and flying from branch to branch restlessly.

And there, in the light that seemed to be of sunlight and moonlight mixed (as sunlight and

moonlight mix together on the high hills in the late summer) the Children who followed the Piper sat with the gods of the old time—Mars, with his black beard and the nose that went out from his face, had the big wine cup raised to his mouth; Silvanus, with the bag of nuts between his knees, talked and talked to the children; Faunus, where he sat, looked as if he were all grown over with moss, and Janus had one face bent to the ground and the other face watching the star above.

Baucis and Philemon brought out their dishes, not forgetting the never-emptied pitcher and the never-emptied basket; they brought the great wine cup that Philemon had specially made to Mars. All talked except Mars: he only took the cup away from his mouth to fill it again. Baucis and Philemon served all pleasantly, and the children had the pitcher of milk that was never emptied and the basket that was always filled with bread and fruit and honey.

When the supper was finished Silvanus,

Faunus, and Janus gave the children presents. Silvanus searched in his bag until he found a black nut for each of the children. When they opened them they found in each a little bird that came out and perched upon the little finger nail, and sang to their owner in the most lovely way. Janus then put a little hinge on the nuts that were opened, so that the little birds might go back into them and be shut up in the nuts again. Faunus gave the children the leaf of an ash tree each; it turned into a little candle flame and went dancing before them wherever they went. Mars put down his wine cup and he said, "I should like to give a present too, but I can't think of one—by Jupiter, I can't!"

And then they heard a voice in the tree. "I, the poor woodpecker, would like to give a present too, but I haven't one to give. But if you would like to listen to a story, I shall tell you one."

"Picus," said Faunus, "you have told that story too often."

"I can't help telling it, I can't help telling it," the woodpecker cried.

"Tell it, oh, tell the story," said all the children.

"I will tell it," said Picus. Then sitting on a branch above them, he began:

"I was once a prince. Then, above all things I loved hunting and being on horseback. I wore a cloak of scarlet, and at my neck I had a brooch of gold to fasten my cloak. And I was most happy then, for I had for my bride Canens, the daughter of Father Janus who is sitting there. She was beautiful in her form and face, and she was even more beautiful in her voice, for she could charm the birds themselves with her singing.

"Even my present form shows something of what I looked like once. But just imagine me as I rode forth on my fine steed, and with my scarlet cloak and the golden brooch that fastened it! Alas, I looked too fine—it was that that

brought about my misfortune! For as I rode out on a day I was seen by the Enchantress Circe who was then going through the wood gathering herbs for her magic brews. She saw me, and immediately she wanted me to give my love to her. But I rode on giving no heed at all to her greetings. I rode on, thinking of Canens, my sweet-voiced bride. Then Circe took the herbs she had gathered, and she made out of them a shape that was like the shape of a wild boar. She sent it to rush across my path. I followed the magic thing. It rushed into a deep thicket, and I, jumping off my horse, went after it with my spear. And then I came upon Circe. She was standing there, with the boar under her feet, all flattened out.

"There Circe took my hands, begging me to come with her, and to leave all others for her. I thought upon my sweet-voiced Canens and I would not go with Circe. She gave me a cup, and she wanted me to drink out of it, saying that it would clear my mind of all thought of

Canens. But I would not forget my bride, and I threw down the cup that Circe wanted me to drink from.

"I turned away from her, but she followed me in a rage. I went through the thicket and I came to where my steed stayed. I was about to mount and ride away when Circe touched me with her wand. Then, instead of being on my horse, I found myself on the branch of a tree. My horse raced off, and when I tried to catch it, I found myself going more swiftly than I was used to go. I was flying from tree to tree. I cried out, but my voice was a bird's voice. I saw I had wings; I saw that my scarlet cloak had changed to scarlet feathers, and that my golden brooch had changed to a golden band. I was a bird now, and in my rage I went pecking with my hard beak at the branches and the trunks of trees. From that time I was a woodpecker.

"My beautiful and sweet-voiced Canens waited at home for me. Evening came, and I did

not return. Then Canens went searching for me, and for six days and six nights she sought me in the woods and on the hills and in the valleys. I did not show myself to her, although I heard her sweet voice calling me through the woods—'Picus, Picus, where art thou?' Then I heard her sing as a swan sings, and when I flew to her, I found her melting away in tears.

She became a stream, the sweet-sounding stream of water that is still called Canens."

This was the story he told; the children were sorry for Picus the Woodpecker, but they liked hearing his story. And when he had told it Picus went restlessly amongst the trees.

Then Mars put down the great cup he had been drinking out of and he stood up to leave. He spoke to Valentine who was beside him. "I can give one of you something," said he, "and you look the most likely one to have it. What would you say to a sword? Lift up the stone that is beside the well and you will find a good blade there." He went off without speaking to the others, taking his spear and marching off with the wolf hanging from it.

They had another visitor, for right up to where they were all sitting Baldwin, the old mill horse, came. The children clapped their hands. "Baldwin has come to ask for a share in our presents," Meg, the little ragpicker, said.

They were all sorry that there was no present for Baldwin. Then Faunus said: "Let us put all the powers we have into a gift to the horse."

Janus opened Baldwin's mouth and Silvanus put a flower into it. Then Faunus walked around the horse three times, repeating strange verses as he walked. "What are they going to give Baldwin?" the children asked one another. "The gift of human speech," Silvanus said.

The children danced around with delight at the thought that Baldwin would be able to speak to them. Valentine and John Ball forgot that they were sorry for themselves. To have a horse that could speak human words—wouldn't that be the most wonderful of all things!

And then they all wondered what Baldwin would say. Suddenly he galloped off; he came back in a while and he opened his mouth, but the only sound that came out of it was a coughing sound. Then he galloped off again. He came back, and when he opened his mouth there

came out of it this time a neighing that sounded like words, or else words that sounded like a neighing. He came back the third time. He opened his mouth, and the children heard and knew what he said:

The ground is soft,
The trees are high
The children talk,
And so do I.

And these were the first words that old Baldwin said. The children cheered to hear the horse talk so plainly.

Valentine, the Emperor's son, and John Ball, the Miller's son, were standing together now. John Ball and Valentine looked at each other, and each thought what a good lad the other was, and each thought, too, that it was good that every day they would be together. They laid a hand on each other's shoulder. And then they saw Golden Hood walking beside the great ash trees.

White as an egg she was; her eyes were dark as the hair that fell out of her golden hood; her

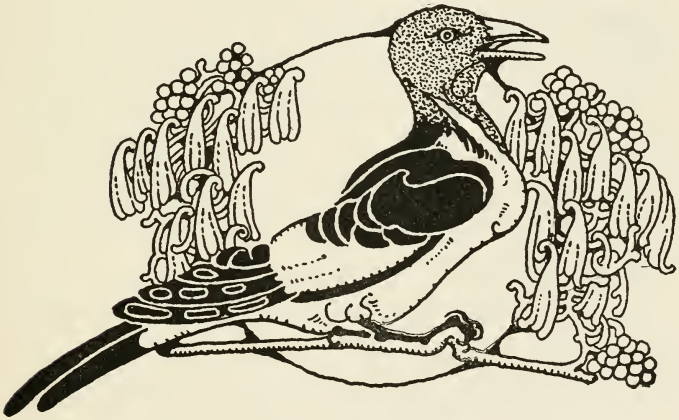
lips and her cheeks were red, and there were two dimples where she smiled. But the most beautiful thing about her was the spirit of sweet delight that filled up her face. One would think that the words she would say would be like the sound of silver bells.

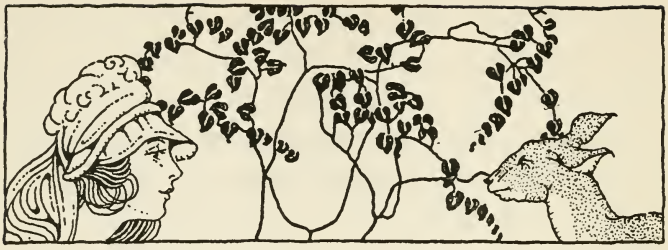
Valentine called to her, and she greeted him and John Ball with gladness. And Valentine thought he should have apples and pears and plums and all sweet and wholesome things to offer her, so dear and beautiful did she seem.

The gods of the old time had gone, and the children were making ready to sleep under the great ash trees. John Ball and Valentine looked at each other. They saw that old Philemon stood beside them. He held two cups in his hands. "I shall give a cup to each of you," he said. "And if one of you is parted from the other, the cup I give will help to bring you together."

Each took the cup that Philemon gave. They were well and smoothly made out of beechen

wood, these two cups, each with a border carved on the outside, and each with the inside covered with yellow wax. Gratefully they took the cups that Philemon gave. They fastened the cups to their belts, and they lay down to sleep, Valentine and John Ball.





ONE GOES INTO THE DARK FOREST

THE children slept. Valentine and John Ball slept beside each other, and the cups that Philemon had given them were rim to rim. The same light, like the mixture of moonlight and sunlight upon a high hill in later summer, was there, and the one star dangled in the sky.

Golden Hood awakened. She saw the children sleeping under the great ash trees and beside the bushy white-thorn trees. She sat up and she looked where the crocuses grew out toward the Deep Wood.

And then Golden Hood saw a shapely thing going where the crocuses grew. She watched it,

and it seemed to her that she was seeing now something that she had expected to see there. A white fawn was there. As Golden Hood looked the fawn turned its head delicately and went toward the Deep Wood.

Then Golden Hood felt she must go beside that white fawn. So she rose up and went toward where it went. The fawn let her come near. It raised its delicate head, and the fawn and the maiden looked at each other. Then it went toward the Deep Wood, and Golden Hood followed.

She saw the white fawn going amongst the trees. She thought the fawn would know her voice and would expect her call, as she had known and had expected the sight of the fawn. She called, but the white thing went on. On and on, and through the trees it went delicately, and Golden Hood went swiftly after it.

She was in the Deep Wood now. Deeper and deeper into the wood the fawn went, and farther and farther from where the ash trees and

the white-thorn trees grew the maiden went, following after it. She heard voices saying: "She is here, she is here, but the witch's sharp-pointed spindle that should pierce her is at the bottom of the deep well." Still she went on. She heard a voice that said: "She is here, the one who is as white as snow, as red as berries, and as dark as a raven's plumage. She is here, but the thorn that should pierce her is still upon the thorn tree."

And now the fawn was farther and farther away from her. Golden Hood was frightened now. Still she thought she might come beside it and that it would follow her back to the Wood of Daylight-Gone. Farther and farther she went. Then the trees became huger, and she knew she was in the Dark Forest. And in the darkness that was there the white fawn became lost.

She heard voices again. One voice said: "The witch's spindle is in the deep well." The other voice said: "The long thorn still grows upon the

thorn tree." Another voice said: "Now that she is in the Dark Forest, you can go behind her, and when she lies down you can cut off a tress of her hair. Your shears will do as well as the spindle or the long thorn."

Golden Hood ran. But she was running in the Dark Forest where there was no place for her to run to. As she ran a rustling thing followed after her. It went on when she went on, and it stopped when she stopped. Once, when she looked around, she saw something dark behind a tree, and she knew she saw the shining blades of shears.

On and on she went, and the rustling went behind her when she went, and the rustling stopped when her fluttering heart made her stop. She was overwearied now, and her body ached because of all the buffets she had had from striking against the trees. She went, and once she stumbled and she fell. She could not hear the rustling because her heart beat so loudly. She knew that the one who carried the shears was

coming to where she lay. She rose up and hurried on. She was wearied to the bone now, but where was the place where she could take rest in safety?

She came to a space where there were no trees. She stood at the edge of the space and she heard the rustling still coming beside her. And then she saw a light—a lantern it was; she went toward it, hoping that there was a place there where she would be guarded while she lay down to rest herself.

The lantern was strung upon a broken tree, and there was a bent man beside it. He looked to Golden Hood like some one she had seen before. The bent man had a sickle across his shoulder. "Oh, tell me, tell me who you are?" Golden Hood cried out as she came near him.

"Hush," said the bent man. "Every one knows me, but no one speaks to me. I am the Man in the Moon."

"Oh, you will help me," said Golden Hood. "You will help me, for you are friendly to men!"

And so, in the Dark Forest, Golden Hood slept.

"Yes, I will help you," said the bent man with the lantern. Saying that he lifted the sickle off his shoulder.

"Know," said he, "that I was once Saturn, who carried the sickle across men's fields. I, too, was one of the gods of the old time. Now I am the Man in the Moon."

"Oh, and will you let me rest under your lantern?" asked Golden Hood.

"I will let you rest within my sickle. No one can cross it to come to touch you," said the Man in the Moon in his far-off voice.

He laid his sickle upon the ground in that space where there were no trees. Golden Hood laid herself down inside the hook of the sickle, and the lantern shone above her. She heard the rustling come nearer, but she knew that nothing could reach across the sickle inside of which she lay. Silently, with his lantern beside him, the Man in the Moon who was once Saturn stood above her. And so, in the Dark Forest, Golden Hood slept.

ANOTHER GOES INTO THE DARK FOREST

VALENTINE wakened up. His mind was on the sword that Mars had told him of. He roused himself. As he did he felt at his belt the cup that Philemon had given him. He felt the cup, but he gave little thought to it, for his mind was on the sword that had been left beneath the stone.

He raised up the stone that was beside the well. There, in a leathern sheath, was the sword. He lifted it; he drew the shining blade out; he held it to the star that dangled in the sky. With that sword in his hand he was a child no more. With that sword in his hand he could go through

the Dark Forest. Yes, he would go through the Dark Forest, and then he would be able to win from Circe the secret of the way back to the world.

And then he would bring the children out of the Wood of Daylight-Gone. But especially would he bring out of it John Ball, his friend, and lovely Golden Hood. With her he would go to his father's great city; they would wed, and he and Golden Hood would be man and wife there.

The children were still sleeping, as he thought. He drank out of the cup that Philemon had given him—he drank water from the Well of Good Luck. He took bread and apples with him and a vessel of water, and he passed by where the children were sleeping under the white-thorn trees; he went through the Deep Wood and he ventured into the Dark Forest.

No bird sang there, no grasshopper nor cricket chirruped there; there was no green upon the ground. There were spiders there, and as Val-

entine went on their webs struck across his face.

The trees were stirless and were like stones. The iron weed and the fire weed, the wolf weed and the lion weed grew under the trees. Valentine went on, holding the sword in his hand. And then, suddenly, he came upon hounds that were hunting in the Dark Forest.

They stopped and then they ran toward him. Valentine put his back to a tree and he held the sword in his hands. The hounds were black, with bristling hair, and foam dropped from their jaws. Right up to him they came. He struck at the first of them with his sword, and it yelped and drew back. Another and another dashed at him, but when he flashed the sword they drew back, whimpering. With tongues hanging out and jaws dripping with foam they dashed again and again at him. Always they yelped and whimpered and drew back when the bright sword was flashed at them. And at last they came on no more.

Then Valentine shouted at them and waved his sword. He heard them scatter and go pattering away through the Dark Forest.

He went on and on and he felt weary and dispirited. Oh, very far did he go through the Dark Forest. More and more weary, and more and more dispirited he became. He went on and on, not knowing where he was going, and at last he came to where the Nixie was standing in her pool.

White was the Nixie, white like the silver birch. Her hair was in a web that was thick and high upon her head, and it was red like the winter sun between the pine trees. She laughed at him as he came near her pool, and she flung water upon him.

"Who are you?" said Valentine.

"I am the Nixie of the Dark Forest," said she, smiling at him.

She laughed, and because she was carefree in the Dark Forest Valentine came near her. He

looked into her face. She had laughing lips and shallow eyes.

"Eh," said the Nixie.

"Oh, Nixie," said Valentine, "what is the way through the Dark Forest?"

"I will show you," said the Nixie, and she smiled, inviting him to come near.

Valentine came to her. She put out her hands to him. Long was the Nixie's body and long were her white arms and hands. She put out her hands, and they fastened upon Valentine's hands.

The Nixie was smiling and smiling. But her hands did not loose from Valentine's hands. There was no grip in them and yet the hands held him.

"O lad, come," said the Nixie.

But Valentine pulled himself away and he drew his sword. Then the Nixie wailed. "I would only show you where to rest in the Dark Forest."

Valentine, the sword in his hand, went away from her. As he went he heard her wailing like the bird that rises and dives down into the lake.

He went on. He met with no one who could show him the way out of the Dark Forest. He was more weary now and more dispirited. And then he heard a voice. He went toward it, and then he knew it was the Nixie's voice.

She was singing and wailing, and wailing and singing. She was standing in her pool, white like a silver birch, and with her webbed hair red like the winter sun between the pine trees.

"Nixie," said Valentine. She smiled at him again as if she would never weep nor wail any more, and she stretched out her arms to him.

He would listen to her speech and let his weariness go from him. He hung his sword on the branch of a tree that was near the pool. Under the tree was a well of water. He took the cup that was at his belt—the cup that old Philemon had given him, and he dipped it into the

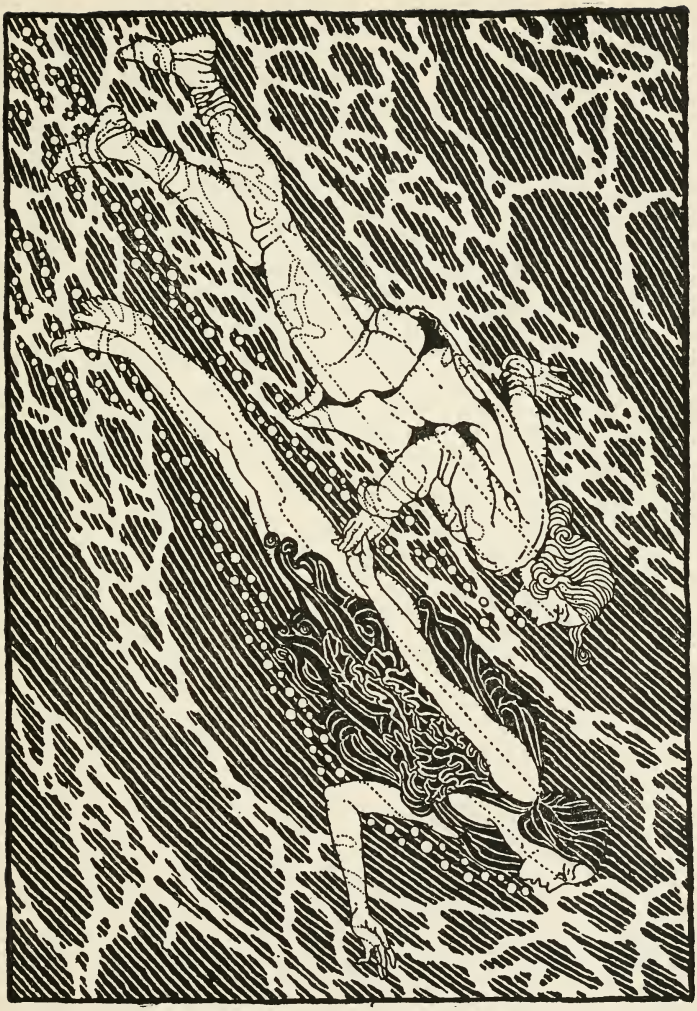
well and he drank the water. Then he left the cup in the well and it floated there.

Her face was without thought and without care. She had short words that seemed to have many meanings, and she said them over and over again. Her hands held his hands and held his arms, and he did not draw away from her. Then she drew him into her pool. She drew him down and down.

Softly, softly he was borne down through the water. He stood on the bottom, and she opened a door in a rock and brought him into a chamber that was heaped up with green moss.

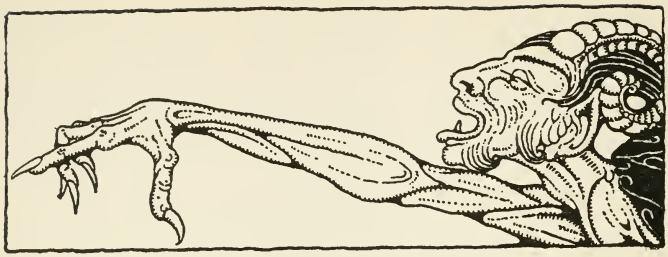
Then she gave him a thick, honeyed drink, and she gave him berries and mushrooms and dead dried things that had long, bony limbs. And Valentine ate and he rested on the thick green moss.

In the chamber under the pool all was shadowy and slumberous, and Valentine stayed there in a half dream, and always near him were the white hands of the Nixie. Her laughter and her



Then she drew him into her pool.

wailing and her singing were the only sounds that came to him in that place below the pool. For the whole of a year he stayed in the chamber under the Nixie's pool.



JOHN BALL

ANOTHER had come into the Dark Forest. He rode on a horse over the dark leaves and the dark needles that were on the ground, and no bird made flight from tree to tree before him. "Oh, where have we come to, Baldwin, my horse?" cried John Ball.

For John Ball had followed Golden Hood and Valentine. When he wakened up he saw that Valentine was not near him. He went where the other children were, and he found that Golden Hood was not with them. Then he and the children went through the Deep Wood and they called out the names of Valentine and of

Golden Hood, but no answer came back to them. And then John Ball knew that both had strayed into the Dark Forest, and that he would have to go search for them. Baldwin, the horse that could speak, said: "Fill your cup with water from the spring and bring it with you, without spilling from it. It is the Well of Good Luck, and the water you take from it will be of use to you."

The children filled the carved wooden cup for him—the cup that Philemon had given him. They put the cup of water into his hands while he sat upon Baldwin, his horse. Dorothy and Ursula brought him bread and fruit from the never-emptied basket. Then John Ball rode from where the great ash trees grew and the bushy white-thorn trees, and he went into the Dark Forest.

"Oh, where have we come to, Baldwin, my horse?" cried John Ball.

Tremors went through Baldwin's skin as they went on. The horse stopped. "On, Baldwin,

my good horse," John Ball cried, "for we must find Valentine and Golden Hood who have strayed into the Dark Forest."

So they went on, going farther and farther into the Dark Forest. John Ball ate bread and fruit and drank a little from the water. He called out the names, "Valentine, Valentine," and "Golden Hood, Golden Hood," but the names sounded hollow amongst the dark and stone-like trees.

As they went on they heard a plunging step coming after them. More and more the tremors went through the skin of Baldwin. Looking back John Ball saw the first creature he had seen since he came into the Dark Forest. It came after them with a plunge and a thud, a thud and a plunge. Something flapped at its wide shoulders as it began to run. The creature had a flat face and one of its feet was shaped as an ass's hoof and the other was as a man's foot, and it was of shining brass. And this creature of the Dark Forest came plunging and

thudding after them, waving a branch, and with its ears flapping as it came.

Baldwin made his best speed, but the creature came nearer and nearer to them. It put out a horny hand and John Ball felt his arm gripped. "Throw the water from the Well of Good Luck upon it," said Baldwin, the horse that could speak. John Ball turned, and he threw the water that was in his cup upon the creature.

The grip on his arm loosened then, and he heard the hoofs of Baldwin as the horse went on. The plunge and the thud, the thud and the plunge came no more behind them. "Where are we now, Baldwin, my horse?" said John Ball.

"We are in the Dark Forest, and miles and miles of it are before us," said Baldwin.

They went on. But now John Ball had become thirsty and there was no water in his cup. He spoke of his thirst. Baldwin went on, and sometimes he sniffed at the ground.

He brought John Ball to a well at last. He

dipped his cup into the water. Seeing the carved cup there he thought upon Valentine. He left it floating on the water. As it floated there another cup came out of the shadows, floating too. The two cups came together and touched rim to rim. John Ball thought he was dreaming as he looked upon them. The carvings on them were the same. Inside each had the same covering of yellow wax. No two cups could be so alike except the cups that Philemon had given Valentine and himself.

One of them was Valentine's for certainty. Then Valentine had been there. John Ball's heart was lifted up again. He stepped from the well, leaving the cups there and leaving Baldwin drinking at the well. He stepped away, and he called out Valentine's name.

But Valentine did not hear his name being called. He was in the chamber under the Nixie's pool, and he was drinking the honey-tasting drink that the Nixie had given him.

John Ball went farther and farther away from

the well and the pool. He called out Valentine's name. He saw a comb on the ground—it was the comb that Golden Hood had worn. And then he saw a girdle. It was the girdle that Golden Hood had worn. Golden Hood was near; surely Valentine and Golden Hood were near him and they were together. Leaving Baldwin behind him John Ball went on and on calling out "Valentine, Valentine," "Golden Hood, Golden Hood," but no voices came back to him.

Now there were in the Dark Forest wild men who were called Satyrs. And every year some one of a band of robbers would come into the Dark Forest and join the Satyrs. These robbers would sit together and eat meats of different kinds and amongst the meats there would be the meat of a wolf. Whoever amongst the robbers ate the wolf meat would change into a Satyr and he would be a Satyr for the whole of a year.

As John Ball went through the Dark Forest calling out the names of Valentine and Golden

Hood he came to where the robbers were sitting around a fire. They had come into the Dark Forest and they were near the edge of it. John Ball, seeing that they were men (although rough and strange-looking men) went to them that he might ask if they had seen Valentine or Golden Hood.

When he came amongst them the robbers made him sit down in their circle. And they offered him meat from amongst the meats they were eating. John Ball, being hungry, sat down and ate with them. And he, and not any of the robbers, ate the wolf meat.

When they had eaten the robbers slept. John Ball slept too. He wakened, and sat up and tried to speak. But only rough sounds came from his mouth. His tongue seemed to have become thick and heavy in his head. He looked and he saw that his legs and his arms were covered as with the skin of a beast. He tore off his clothes, and when he looked upon his body he saw that his body was all rough and hairy. He

could not cry nor speak human words, for what came from his thick tongue were the growls and grunts of the half man, half beast. He had eaten wolf meat, and for a year he would be one with the Satyrs.

John Ball ran from where the robbers had been sitting. He ran toward the well beside which he had left Baldwin. Baldwin, his horse, was there. He tried to shout to Baldwin, but a howl only came from his mouth. Baldwin saw him. Tremors went through the horse. He turned and raced away. And John Ball could not call out his name nor make Baldwin stay.

John Ball went to the well and he looked into the water where the cups were, and he saw himself changed into a Satyr, being covered all over with a beast's rough skin. Then he knew what terrible ill luck had befallen him in the Dark Forest. Now if he came upon Valentine or upon Golden Hood they would not know him. Even Baldwin had raced away from him.

He lamented, and he heard his own voice as

the howl of a Satyr. And while he lamented the Satyrs came and stood around him. John Ball dashed away from the place, and he found somewhere to hide at the edge of the Dark Forest. His lair was the great hollow of a tree, and there he lived, eating roots and honey, and keeping himself from the band of Satyrs. And so it was with John Ball for the whole of a year.

GOLDEN HOOD

SHE wakened up, and the Man with the Lantern was not beside her any more. All alone was she in the Dark Forest.

She stood up and she called out the name of the one whom she would most like to have near her; she called out the name of Valentine. But the name sounded hollow amongst the dark and stone-like trees.

Then Golden Hood ran on and on. Oh, how might she get out of this Dark Forest! She ran on until she saw before her a sight so welcome that she stopped for joy. There was Baldwin, John Ball's old mill horse! Baldwin saw her, and he whinnied to her.

"O Baldwin," cried Golden Hood, "tell me—Oh, how glad I am that you can speak, Baldwin!—tell me where is John Ball and where is Valentine."

"I cannot say, I cannot say," said old Baldwin. "My master has gone, and there is something so terrible about the Dark Forest that shakes and shivers go through my skin. Let us go from the Dark Forest. My master, John Ball, will surely find us."

"But where can we go, Baldwin—where can we go?" said Golden Hood.

"Even now I have seen a place that marks the end of the Dark Forest," said Baldwin. "Come with me, for the darkness here makes tremors go all through me."

So Golden Hood went with Baldwin, the old mill horse. They passed the well where the cups that Philemon had given Valentine and John Ball were touching rim to rim; they passed the pool where the Nixie had stood before she drew Valentine down and into the Chamber of Green

Moss; they passed the fire around which the robbers had sat when John Ball had eaten the wolf meat that changed him; they came to the last of the stone-like trees, and they were at the edge of the Dark Forest.

They hurried away as swiftly as they could. Bats squeaked around them, and Baldwin was still so filled with the terror of the Dark Forest that tremors went all through him.

They came into a space that had been green and that now was dry. In the middle of that space there was a tree that was all bare and broken. Golden Hood stayed beside it, and as she did she heard a voice from the tree saying, "Tend me, O, tend me, living one."

She stayed under the tree, and again she heard the voice of the tree and it said, "Tend me, O, tend me, living one." "I will tend you, tree," said Golden Hood.

She sat under the tree for a while, and Baldwin, the old mill horse, went searching around. He came back to where Golden Hood was, and

he took her and showed her where there was a well of water, and cresses and red berries hanging above the well. Baldwin found fresh grasses near and he began to eat.

Golden Hood found a gourd, and she filled it with water and brought it back to the tree. She watered the tree. She touched its broken branches with her hands, and she brought more and more water to it.

And near the tree Golden Hood and Baldwin stayed. In the mornings they would go to the well, and one would eat the red berries and the other would eat the lush grass. Then Golden Hood would bring water in the gourd, and she would water and tend the tree. The tree became less and less withered; its dead branches fell away, and although it was still leafless it began to have the look of a sound tree.

And often Golden Hood looked at herself in the well. Her dark hair became longer and finer; her lips became redder, and her eyes became more and more shining. So lovely was the

image that she saw that she could not help but smile down to it as it showed itself in the well.

The moons in the night changed as the days and nights went by; still Golden Hood tended the tree. When she had watered it and touched all its branches Baldwin would come and talk to her. Baldwin would tell her that some day and soon John Ball would come out of the Dark Forest. "And will he have Valentine with him?" Golden Hood would ask. "He will find Valentine and he will have Valentine with him," Baldwin would say.

The days went by, and a bud came here and a bud came there on the tree. The buds swelled into leaves and the whole tree became green and joyous. A first white blossom came. The tree swayed its branches so that the blossom fell and touched Golden Hood on the lips where she lay below.

She sat up, her hands in her lap and her golden hood fallen upon her shoulders. She

thanked the tree for giving her its first blossom. And as she sat there with Baldwin near by she looked over and she saw one come out of the Dark Forest.

She stood up and went to call out, but then fear came upon her as she watched the creature. It was a creature upright like a man, but all covered over with a beast's skin and with lengthy arms. Baldwin watched and watched the strange creature. But Golden Hood cried out in fear, and she trembled, and she held to the branches of the tree.

The strange creature stopped, and it held out arms to them. And then it crouched down on the grass, and it seemed to Golden Hood that it was in great misery. All the time Baldwin, the old mill horse, stood watching. And then the strange creature turned and went back into the Dark Forest.

And what did Baldwin do? Baldwin who dreaded the Dark Forest went following the strange creature. Golden Hood saw Baldwin go

With an arm around each eagle was the maiden Golden Hood.

and called after him. But the old mill horse never turned back. She stood under the tree with its green-leafed branches, and she watched Baldwin go into the Dark Forest.

She watched and she watched. And then she saw Baldwin come out of the Dark Forest. He came galloping toward her. He tossed his mane as if he had something good to tell her. Nearer and nearer to her Baldwin came. He could use human words, but he had never learnt to shout aloud. Golden Hood watched Baldwin come, and she saw that there were two behind Baldwin.

And then two great shadows came over her. A shadowy thing swept down, and there was a whirring all around her. And then Golden Hood felt herself caught up and lifted and carried away.

For two great eagles had flown down, and one caught Golden Hood and the other caught Golden Hood, and they flew up in the air with the maiden between them. Up, up, and away from the green

tree they flew with her, and over a valley that was filled with stones. Their wings were spread out, and between the eagles, with an arm around each, was the maiden Golden Hood.

VALENTINE

BY her soft hands, by her soft words the Nixie held Valentine, and by the heavy, honeyed drink that she gave him. And she took his sword and she hid it under the deep green moss of the chamber where he stayed. When the sword had been hidden, there was nothing to waken Valentine out of the shadow and the slumber that was in that chamber, and there was nothing to remind him of the quest he had started upon—the winning of the way through the Dark Forest, and afterward the helping of the children out of the Wood of Daylight-Gone and back into the world.

His mind was drowsed, and there was nothing to remind him of his quest. He would listen to the Nixie while she sat before him weaving rushes with her hands. Her words were mocking now, and she had laughter for Valentine. But now and again the memory of the Dark Forest would come back to him, and he would see himself going blindly through it, trying to find a way out of it—he would see himself, but it was as if he looked upon another.

Then, one day, he raised up the green moss, and he found his own bright sword. The thought that he had had in the Wood of Daylight-Gone, when he had held that sword up to the star that dangled in the sky, came back to him—the thought of winning his way through darkness and dangers with that sword in his hand.

He turned back the stone that shut the Chamber of Green Moss out from the water of the Nixie's pool. The water rushed in on him and beat on him until he was senseless almost. He pushed himself through the water and, panting,

he came to the surface of the Nixie's pool. Still he held his sword in his hand. He flung it beyond the pool and he sprang out of the water.

He looked back and he saw the Nixie standing in her pool, white and soft and smiling. Her hair was like the winter sunset through the pine trees.

"Come back to me, come back," the Nixie said.

"I have to find a way through the Dark Forest," said Valentine.

"You cannot go through the Dark Forest," the Nixie said. "Come back to me. The pool is safe and I will be kind to you. Oh, I have sweeter things to give you than I have yet given."

"No, Nixie. I go," said Valentine. He sprang away from the Nixie's pool. As he went he heard her wailing like the bird that dives into and rises out of the water of a lake.

Oh, how dark and lonely and terrible was the Dark Forest! More lonely and more dark and more terrible than it had been when Valentine

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went through it before! How soft it was to rest on the green moss and how safe from dangers it was below the Nixie's pool!

He came near to the Nixie's pool again without his knowing it. He came to the well where he had left the cup that Philemon had given him. He went to drink. Then as he stood by the edge he remembered the cup that he had left there. And he saw that the cup was floating upon the water.

The cup of carved wood that Philemon had given him was there. As it floated near another cup came out of the shadows, floating too. The two cups came together, touching rim to rim. Valentine thought he was dreaming when he looked upon them. He put his hands down and he took up the cups. The carvings on them were the same, and they had the same covering of yellow wax inside. No cups could be so alike except the cups that Philemon had given to John Ball and himself.

Valentine's heart lifted again. John Ball had

been there; he had been at this pool and he had come into the Dark Forest to seek him. John Ball had left his cup as a sign that he would come back to find him there.

Valentine left the two cups in the water. He turned away, and he saw standing before him a strange creature. All covered with beast's skin it was; its arms were like a man's, but they were long and covered with hair, and rough hair fell down on its shoulders. When Valentine looked on the creature he lifted up his sword.

And then the creature cried out to him as if it were trying to make him understand something, and sounds that were nearly human words came from its mouth. It seemed to Valentine that it was not unfriendly to him, and that it was trying to let him see something. Valentine looked around; then he saw that there was a band of creatures half human and half beast-like coming at him, branches in their hands. He put his back to the tree and held his sword ready to guard himself.

The strange creature that he had seen first went toward the others, a branch in his hand. It fought with the others, holding them back from Valentine. Then Valentine, the sword in his hand, rushed at them. The creature that he had first seen helped him, and the other wild things fled amongst the trees.

The Satyrs fled. All but the one who had helped him. And this one threw down the branch he held and went to the well. Valentine saw it take up the cup that was on the water. The creature held the cup out as if to show it to Valentine.

Valentine took up the other cup. He held it out to the creature that had been so friendly, and, as he did, he thought upon John Ball, who had left the cup in the well.

The two stood facing each other, the youth and the strange wild being. Both held out the carven cups. The strange creature passed its fingers over the cup it held as if to show Valentine the carvings that were upon it. Valen-

tine watched, and he saw that tears were flowing from the eyes of the wild being.

He thought he would touch the rough hand and be friends with the creature that had helped him. He touched the hand and the other grasped his hand. The strange being looked at Valentine, and its eyes were the eyes of John Ball. And again it fingered the cup. It showed Valentine the inside made smooth with yellow wax, and the outside with the carvings upon it. Then it came over Valentine's mind that this, for all his strangeness and wildness, was his friend John Ball!

He saw that the other was trying to make himself known to him by the cup Philemon had given. And Valentine cried out, "Are you John Ball, my comrade?" The other made sounds that became human words. And as they stood there, clasping each other's hands, they heard the sound of something running toward them. They looked, and they saw a horse. It was Baldwin. And the horse came to them. Then

the one who had seemed a wild being of the wood went to Baldwin and the horse whinnied and put his head down on him.

Then did Valentine know that this was indeed John Ball, his friend. He put his arms around him and he kissed him. He wept, too, knowing that John had come into the Dark Forest to seek him, and that the evil of the forest had changed him into this beast-like form. He wept over his comrade. But Baldwin was calling to them in human words, and speaking to them of Golden Hood. The horse turned and hurried away, and Valentine and John Ball hurried after him. They came out of the Dark Forest, and they came in sight of the tree that Golden Hood had made grow green. And as they did they saw two great eagles swoop down, and they saw them take Golden Hood up and go flying with her, away and away, and across the Valley of Stones.

Over the Valley of Stones the eagles flew and away toward the Dark Mountains. Away the

eagles flew, carrying Golden Hood, and the maiden could not help but feel light and happy as she was borne along, her arm around the neck of each.

With whirring wings they swept toward the Dark Mountains; then on toward the high middle peak they flew. Over the peak of the mountain they circled; their nest was there. Around it and around they circled and then they went down and into the nest.

High and deep and wide was the nest of the eagles. All the treasures of the world were there. When they let her down she rested upon the golden fleece that the heroes had brought back to Greece. They gave her, to put on one of her feet, the golden slipper that the eagle had carried off from Rhodope. They gave her, to put around her neck, the golden necklace that the Giant-women had given Freya. The golden apples that the golden bird had carried off from the golden tree were there, and the golden egg that the golden goose laid.

The nest was hooped all around with iron hoops, and it had seven doors of iron. The doors were tightly shut; they could be opened only from the inside, and there was a window over each door. Looking out through the seven windows one could see the seven sides of the world.

In a corner of the nest a fire of spicewood was burning. Over it was a cauldron. Out of the cauldron a vapor went that, mounting up at first very thinly, made the clouds in the sky. The eagles were very particular about this fire. They gave a stool to Golden Hood, and they told her to sit beside the fire and keep the spicewood upon it, so that the cauldron might boil and the vapor from the cauldron might keep mounting up. They showed her after that the chest where they kept their food. It had a heavy lid, and Golden Hood had to use all her strength to raise it. The world's nicest food was in that chest, and the eagles sat on the rim of the nest to watch her eat of it.

They told her then that they were going to

fetch her a ring to go on her little finger—a ring cut out of a single diamond. Then they flew from off the rim of the nest. Golden Hood had just put the spicewood upon the fire, and now she stood upon the stool and watched out through one of the windows. She saw the eagles sweeping away. They flew swiftly out of sight; the maiden was left with nothing near her; all alone in the high, iron-hooped nest was she, within the seven doors that were tightly closed.

THE NEST OF EAGLES

SHE sat on the stool and put spicewood upon the fire, and the vapor mounted up from the cauldron and became the clouds in the sky. For a long time she sat on the stool beside the fire, and then she thought she would look out of a window and see if the eagles were flying back.

She took the stool from beside the fire and she stood up on it and looked out through the first window. When she looked through that window she saw all the forests of the world; green birds were in the branches, and monkeys of all sorts were in the trees: for long and long did Golden Hood look out through that window.

She looked out through the second window and she saw all the seas of the world: ships were sailing here and there and dolphins were sporting on the waves; she saw the flying fishes flying and she saw the great whales spouting and she saw the branches of red coral in the green sea: for long and long did Golden Hood look out through the second window.

Then she looked out through the third window. She saw all the deserts of the world; hard and gleaming were the deserts; she saw little gazelles race swiftly across them; she saw the dragons come out of their dens, and she saw the ostriches standing there with their heads buried in the sand: for long and long did Golden Hood look out through the third window.

She thought she had been at each window only for a moment of time, but she had been at each far longer than she thought. She took her stool and stood upon it and looked out through the fourth window. She saw all the plains and prairies and pampas and savannas of the world; she

saw them covered with green grass and blue grass and brown grass; she saw wild horses with flowing manes and tails galloping across, and she saw clouds of little birds coming down to eat the seeds of the grasses.

Then she looked out through the fifth window and she saw all the snowy places of the world: she saw the reindeer scraping away the snow with their hoofs; she saw the big bear climbing up the stair of an iceberg; she saw the white foxes sitting in a circle, talking to each other, and she saw the snow goose scrape a hole in the snow and make a nest for her eggs.

She looked out through the sixth window wondering what she might see there. What she saw was worth long looking at. She saw all the gardens of the world, with flowering trees that marched away and bushes of roses that rushed at her, with beds of white lilies each having a golden star in its cup, with blue morning-glories and blue Canterbury bells and blue smock flowers, with dim moon-flowers and with exalted sun-

flowers that lifted up their heads like golden clocks.

Then Golden Hood stood upon her stool and she looked through the seventh window. She saw a bare tree with a raven on the top of it; she saw a black house with smoke coming out of it; she saw a bent old woman sitting under the tree.

Seeing the smoke Golden Hood thought of the fire that she had to tend. She jumped off the stool and came to it. The fire was out and there was nothing but gray ashes on the hearth, and no vapor came out of the cauldron that was over the fire.

Oh, what was she to do? For seven hours she had been looking out through the seven windows, not knowing how time was passing, and now the fire that she had been set to watch was out, and she had no way of lighting it again! But now she thought of the smoke she had seen coming out of the black house. She would go to it and get some coals of fire and bring them back and light the fire under the cauldron.

So she opened the seventh door and went out of the eagles' nest. She went down toward the black house that was beside the bare tree. It was farther away than she had thought, and she spent hours and hours in coming to it.

The bent old woman was not before the house. Golden Hood peeped in and saw her. She was looking into a glass, and "Come in," she said, and the voice she said it in sounded to the maiden like the voice she had heard in the Dark Forest when one said, "Your shears will do as well as the spindle or the long thorn." Golden Hood had taken two steps in and now she took one step back. The hag stepped up to her and took her by the wrist.

"You are cold, cold, girl," said she.

"Oh, no, I'm not cold," said Golden Hood.

"You'll have to stay for a while," said the hag.

"But I don't like the creaking of the bare tree outside, nor the flapping of the raven's wings."

"All the same you will have to stay here until I warm you."

"But you cannot warm me, bent old woman."

"What have you come to me for, then?"

"For a coal of fire."

"I'll give you two coals of fire if you wait until the coals are red."

"I will wait then," said Golden Hood.

So she stayed, waiting for the coals to become red. But when they were near becoming red the hag would strike them with her iron tongs, saying that she wanted to stir them to a better glow, and then the coals would lose what redness they had.

Once she went to look into her glass. Then Golden Hood seized two glowing coals and she put them into a pot, and she ran out of the door, carrying the pot with her.

The hag screamed after her.

But Golden Hood ran on and on. She was a long time coming from the eagles' nest to the black house, and she was a long time going from the black house back to the eagles' nest. When

she was halfway back the hag's son came into his mother's house.

"Why did you not hurry back?" said the hag to him. "The maiden was here who is as white as snow, and as black as the raven's wing, and as red as red berries. Why were you not back? I tried to keep her, but she got away from me and she is halfway back ere this."

When her son heard this he put on his iron shoes and he went following after Golden Hood. He went very swiftly, and it was not long before she heard him coming behind her.

She ran and ran, and she was at the eagles' nest when she felt his breath behind her. She pushed at the seventh door and went in. And then she closed the seventh door, and she fastened it tightly behind her.

The hag's son came to the door. He tried to push it open, but the iron door would not open for him. He put his fingers through the crack, and Golden Hood saw his long nails sticking through. Then he knew he could not get in; he

went away, and Golden Hood heard the clatter of his iron shoes as he went back and toward the black house that was beside the bare tree.

Golden Hood made the fire light up again. She put spicewood upon it, and the vapor came out of the cauldron again. She sat on the stool beside the fire and she tended it while she waited for the eagles to come back again.

For a long while she sat by the fire, and then she went from the stool and to the seventh door. She wanted to see how tightly it was shut, and she put her hand against the crack. The nail that the hag's son had put through was sticking there, and the long nail went into the palm of her hand.

Then Golden Hood fell down on the floor of the eagles' nest. She lay there with her red lips parted and her forehead all white and the black tresses of her hair falling around her. She lay there with the sky above her, and the treasures of the world all about her, and with the seven iron doors closed upon her, while the eagles, fly-

ing, flying on, had not yet come to the shoulder of the world—the shoulder that they would have to fly over to come to the place where they would get for her finger the ring that was cut out of a single diamond. So the sleeping maiden lay.

THE SLEEPING MAIDEN

BUT there was Valentine to go seeking her, and there was John Ball to go with Valentine, and there was Baldwin, too, to help them.

The two had come to the well beside which Golden Hood used to sit, and from which she used to bring the water to freshen the tree. Baldwin, the old mill horse, brought them to the well, and Valentine and John Ball sat down beside it. Violets were now growing beside the well, and many blossoms were upon the tree that Golden Hood had tended. They sat down, and they talked of the maiden and of their hopes of finding her.

Valentine told John Ball of how he had gone down into the Nixie's pool and of how he had stayed in the Chamber of Green Moss; he told how he had remembered his quest, and of how he had won his way out of the power of the Nixie. John Ball drank water from the well, and as he did his tongue became less heavy and he was able to speak human words to Valentine. He told Valentine how, after he had eaten of the meat that the robbers had set before him, he had become like a Satyr; and he told how he had stayed in the forest by himself, often coming to the well where he had left his cup beside Valentine's cup. He told how he had come to know where Golden Hood was, and of how he had watched over her, keeping many evil things away from her. He told how he had once come near hoping that she would not be frightened of him, and of how she had been frightened, and of how old Baldwin had known him and had followed him, and of how, upon that very day, he had come upon Valentine by the well.

As they stayed in that place a change came over John Ball: the skin that was like a beast's skin came off, and his arms became like a youth's arms; he could speak human words, and in a while he came to be the goodly youth that Valentine had known. Thereupon Valentine rejoiced, and they both said that the time had come for them to go seek Golden Hood through the world. They started off, Valentine and John Ball and old Baldwin, the mill horse. They crossed the Valley of Stones, and at long last they came to the black house that was beside the bare tree.

Valentine climbed the bare tree so that he might look over to the mountain. As he did the raven flapped and screeched in the branches; the hag's son came out of the black house, and he had an axe in his hands. Seeing the youth in the tree he began to hack and cut with his sharp, heavy axe; the tree swayed where Valentine climbed, and the raven screeched and flapped around him. Still he went climbing the tree, for he knew that

from the treetop, if he could reach it, he could see where the eagles had their nest.

John Ball came to drive away the hag's son, but as he did the hag herself came out of the black house. She pelted stones at John Ball and at Baldwin so that they were not able to come near.

The tree swayed and swayed under the strokes of the axe, but still Valentine went on and up. Hanging his sword around his neck he reached the top of the tree. He looked from the top and he saw the eagles' nest on the peak of the mountain; he saw the iron doors and the iron hoops that hooped it round. Then Valentine slid down the tree and stood on the ground before the hag's son.

The hag's son raised his axe in his long arms, and he rushed at Valentine. But the youth had his good bright sword in his hand, and he struck at the hag's son. All the time the hag kept flinging stones: first, she threw the pebbles that tiled the roof of her house and then she threw the

stones that made the walls of her black house, and it was wonderful to see how quickly the roof went, and then one wall and another wall. All the time her son kept striking at Valentine. His long arms brought the edge of the axe near the youth's flesh, making a wound again and again. But at last Valentine got a stroke at him with his sword. From that time the hag's son began to get smaller and smaller, and the time came when Valentine saw before him only a cross-tempered, black dwarf.

When he had shrunk so that he was below him Valentine smote and struck off the dwarf's head. Then the hag, seeing her son's head cut off, gave a scream and fled away, and the raven went from the broken tree and went flapping after her.

Valentine left John Ball to guard the place while he went to the eagles' nest. The journey was long but he came to the end of it at last. He saw the seven doors of iron, and one after the other he tried to open them. None would open for all his effort. And the nest was too

high and too smooth for him to climb to the rim.

He called, "Golden Hood, Golden Hood," but no sign came from within the nest; he listened, and there was no stir within. No matter how he did it he would have to climb, he thought, over the rim of the nest.

With his sharp sword he began to hack out steps; he climbed up and up the steps he had made. He came to the rim of the nest and he looked over it.

There was Golden Hood, and she was sleeping. She was lying on the Fleece of Gold, and beside her were the golden apples that the golden bird had carried from off the golden tree, and the golden slipper that the eagle had carried off from Rhodope, and the golden egg that the golden goose had laid. Golden Hood was sleeping and her dark lashes spread under her pale eyelids, and her dark tresses curled over her white forehead, and her red lips were opened to the snowdrops of her teeth.

She was lying on the Fleece of Gold.

Valentine stooped over her; he lifted her hands, and in the palm of one of her hands he saw a nail sticking. He drew it out; it was a nail from the finger of the hag's son. As Valentine drew it out of the palm of her hand a flush came into her face and a breath went through her body. He lifted her up and her eyes opened. He kissed her on the mouth and all the gladness of life came back to her. "Golden Hood, Golden Hood," he said, "will you come with me?"

Softly she said: "Once you were going to speak to me, and I thought your words would be like something that one would hear when one is playing, or dancing, or singing. But now I think that your words will be like birds that I will clasp to me. I will go with you, Valentine."

So they opened the door from the inside and they went out. With hand clasped in hand they went and they came to where Valentine had left John Ball. The hag's house was no longer there; pebble and stone, it was all gone. The tree still stood, but instead of the raven there were now

two doves in its branches and they were building a nest.

John Ball was there and Baldwin, the old mill horse, and Golden Hood was overjoyed to see them both. She clasped John Ball's hand, and she put her arm around the neck of old Baldwin. Then they went on their journey. Greatly surprised they were to find after a few turnings that they were back in the Deep Wood and near where the children were.

They were to meet with the hag again. Before they reached the first white-thorn tree she stood before them. "There will be separation for two of the three of you," she said, "short, or long, or forever as I can make it." Saying that she ran from them, and her raven flapped after her.

THE CHILDREN LEAVE THE WOOD OF DAYLIGHT GONE

AND when they came into the Wood of Daylight-Gone whom did they see there but the one who was in reds and yellows! There was the Pied Piper. He was under a white-thorn tree and the children were all seated around him.

He was not playing to them now—he was just talking to them. Valentine and Golden Hood, John Ball and Baldwin came to the place where the children were seated. They were so bent on listening to what the Piper was telling them that they hardly noticed who had come back.

The three sat down with the rest of the chil-

dren. The never-emptied basket was there and the never-emptied pitcher, and Valentine, Golden Hood, and John Ball began to eat and drink for they were very hungry.

"Now," the Pied Piper was saying, "I'll take you out of the Wood of Daylight-Gone and I'll bring you into the country I was telling you about."

"What country is it, Piper?" said one of the children.

"It is the country that is ruled over by Prester John," said the Piper. "And there is abundance of everything in Prester John's country except children."

"And what will I be if I go there?" said Philomena, the countess's child.

"You will be the first lady in waiting, and you will wear a brocade gown, and walk before every one else into the queen's chamber and say, 'It is time, Your Majesty, to arise.' "

"Oh, I would love to do that," said Philomena.

"And what will I be?" said Simple Simon, his round eyes fixed upon the Piper.

"You will watch to see that the maids roll the paste and that the cooks don't let the pies burn in the ovens."

"Oh, I'd love to do that," said Simple Simon.

"What will I be?" said Johnny-Jump-Up, whose father used to eat fire in the market place on Thursdays.

"You will be given to the King's Arab to train; you will be made a lion tamer; you shall have a hoop and a long whip, and you will make the long-maned yellow lion jump through the hoop."

"I'd love to do that," said Johnny-Jump-Up.

"What will I be given to do?" said Mary-Mary, quite contrary.

"You will plant cockleshells in the Queen's garden and watch them grow," said the Piper.

"I'd love to do that," said Mary.

"What will I be?" said Meg, the ragpicker's daughter.

"You will make patchwork dresses for the ladies of the court to wear in Lent," said the Piper.

"I'd just love to do that," said Meg.

"And what will I be?" said Tom-Tom, the Piper's son.

"You will be the one who will play the geese home in the evenings," said the Piper.

"I'd love to do that," said Tom-Tom.

It was settled that every child should have something very nice to do in the country that Prester John ruled over. The baker's thirteen children, boys and girls, were to bake buns with currants in them for the pages in the court and tarts with damsons in them for the maids of honor; Angelus and Angelica were to ring the silver bells that were in the kiosks in the King's eastern garden; Elizabeth, Betty, Betsy, and Bess were to mind the cats and the kittens; Jack and Jill and Wee Willie Winkie were to keep guard on the gallery of parrots; Jack Sprat, Jack Snipe, and Jack Horner were to keep the

pools clear for the King's purple fishes; Jumping Joan said she would not go at all unless she was let go into the lion's cage with Johnny-Jump-Up, and this was granted her; Perrie, Merrie, and Dixie, Margery Daw and Little Jack Straw, Tom Tucker and Jack Nicker were to stay in the kitchen and keep the pancakes from being burnt; Dorothy and Ursula were to tend the King's pomegranate trees, and they were to be given a silver penny for every pomegranate they made grow; Robin and Richard and Nancy, too, were to be given what they liked best: they were to have charge of the whole muster of peacocks.

Every one was satisfied and every one was ready to set out for the country of Prester John. Valentine and John Ball and Golden Hood were even more ready than the others.

"What could I be in the country of Prester John?" asked Valentine.

"You will be made the Captain of the King's Bodyguard," said the Piper.

"And you will be given a horse to match that sword of yours," he continued.

That seemed good to Valentine. He looked at Golden Hood, and she smiled on him.

"And what will they let me be?" said John Ball.

"You will become the King's faithful councillor," said the Piper.

Golden Hood did not ask what they would give her to do. She just whispered to Valentine that she hoped that the King's Bodyguard would not be far away from where she would be.

"What will Golden Hood be?" said Valentine.

"Prester John has a son and his son wants a wife. Golden Hood will be his wife."

"No, no, no," said Valentine.

"Do not go into that country even though they make you Captain of the King's Bodyguard," said Golden Hood. "We will stay here, Valentine."

"We will not go," said Valentine.

"We will not go," said John Ball.

"All the others, then, will leave the Wood of Daylight-Gone with me," said the Piper, "and you three must stay behind."

"We will stay behind," said Golden Hood.

"We will stay behind," said Valentine.

"We will stay behind," said John Ball.

Then Valentine, Golden Hood, and John Ball went apart from the others. Valentine was sad that he was not leaving the Wood of Daylight-Gone—that wood that one would never grow up in—and John Ball sat there very quietly with Baldwin's head touching his shoulder. All the children went to sleep under the great ash trees, and Valentine, John Ball, and Golden Hood went to sleep with Baldwin moving around them.

The three children sat up together. "We will leave the Wood of Daylight-Gone," Golden Hood heard Valentine say.

"Oh, do not go with them, Valentine," cried Golden Hood. She was looking at the rest of the children; they were all making ready to follow the Piper out of the wood.

Said Valentine: "We need not go with the Piper, and yet we can leave the Wood of Daylight-Gone. Silvanus told us. Just as I woke up I remembered what he said.

"We can go to Circe the Enchantress and ask of her our way into the world. We can go to Circe because we have been through the Dark Forest."

"Oh, how wonderful of you to know that, Valentine," said Golden Hood.

"And now I will think of how we may come to Circe," said Valentine.

"Picus knows. Picus can bring us to Circe," said John Ball.

"We will go to her," said Valentine, "we will go now, and, since we have been through the Dark Forest, she will surely show us the way out of the Wood of Daylight-Gone."

The other children were drinking at the Well of Good Luck and making ready to go. They called to Valentine and John Ball and Golden Hood and waved their hands to them. Then

the three children went off to seek Picus the Woodpecker.

They met Picus the Woodpecker. Picus was coming to see the children off and to tell them his story once more before they left. Valentine called to him. "Picus, Picus," said Valentine, "show us the way to where Circe the Enchantress abides."

"Do not go to her, do not go to her," said Picus in a frightened way.

"Silvanus said we might go to her. If you will show us the way we will tell your story in the world."

"I will fly near where she abides," said Picus, "but you should not go near Circe the Enchantress."

He shook out his wings that had the scarlet upon them, and he went flying from branch to branch. Valentine, John Ball, and Golden Hood followed Picus the Woodpecker. On and on he flew. He came into the Deep Wood and they followed him. Very far into the Deep Wood he

brought them. But at last he stayed upon a branch and would not fly any farther.

"Near you now," said he, when they came up to him, "near you now is the abode of Circe the Enchantress."

They came to a beautiful lawn; a marble house stood in the middle of it, and there were roses and fountains before the house. And there was Circe the Enchantress weaving at her loom. There were creatures around her—not the strange and fearful beasts that wandering men saw when they came to Circe in the old days, but small and harmless creatures—squirrels and coneys and odd-looking hedgehogs.

As the three children came near the squirrels ran up the trees, scolding them; the coneys went running around them, and the hedgehogs put out their snouts and sniffed at them.

Circe the Enchantress, when she saw the three children, ceased weaving at her loom. Valentine came to where she stood, and Golden Hood

and John Ball stood at the hedge with old Baldwin beside them.

She was very lovely, but odd looking, Valentine thought, with one of her eyes blue like sapphire and the other eye dark like a dark flower. She was very lovely and odd looking and she smiled on the boy.

"What have you come to Circe for, youth?" said she in a voice that Valentine remembered afterward above every song he had heard. "What have you come to Circe for?"

"To ask of you, O great Enchantress, to show us the way out of the Wood of Daylight-Gone and into the world of men. We have been through the Dark Forest, and Silvanus said that if we came to you, you would show us the way out into the world."

"I will show you the way into the world," said Circe, and she smiled at him and held the bright shuttle in her hand. "They will say in your world that it was strange that Circe helped you. Tell them that Circe never enchanted the

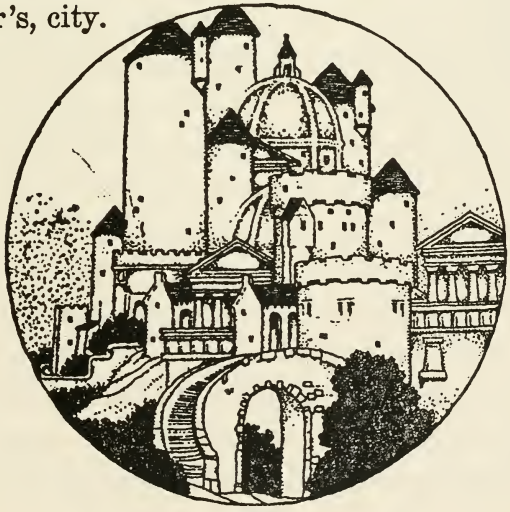
simple-hearted. And, since I will not enchant, I will help you."

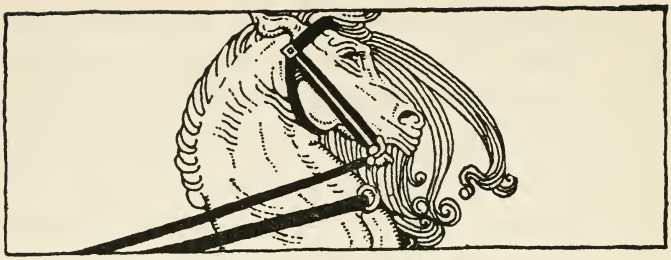
She lifted the shining shuttle that was in her hand and she flung it through the air. "Follow the thread of the shuttle," she said, "and the thread will bring you to the end of the Wood of Daylight-Gone."

Valentine thanked the lovely enchantress with her eye of black and her eye of sapphire. They saw the thread—it went on, hanging from twig to twig, fine and iridescent, like a spider's line. They followed it, and they came at last to the edge of the Wood of Daylight-Gone.

A mountain was before them with a cave in the face of it. They went into the cave, and passage after passage opened before them. They put Golden Hood riding upon Baldwin, and Valentine and John Ball went walking beside. They came out on the side of another mountain and they were in the world of men again with towns seen far away and a river and a mountain.

As they looked toward the river they saw the children all going in one direction with the Piper dressed in his reds and yellows going before them. They were going to the country of Prester John where each one would have the lot in life that best pleased her or him. Valentine, John Ball, and Golden Hood shouted to the children, but they were too far away now to hear. And now the three had to think of how they could come to the Emperor's, Valentine's father's, city.





THE WITCH'S CURSE

THEY sent messengers before them to announce their coming. And at last they came to a hill that overlooked the Emperor's city with its silver steeples and its golden domes. While they were on that hill they heard the bells ringing to the east and the west, to the north and the south to give them welcome, and to bid the people rejoice that the Emperor's son was coming to his father's city.

Valentine was overwearied, and he laid his head upon the lap of Golden Hood and he went to sleep. Golden Hood sat with his head on her lap; she looked out to the city, and she heard nothing but the bells that were ringing and ring-

ing for their coming. But John Ball was listening to what Baldwin, the old mill horse, said.

"My life is all but over," said Baldwin, the horse that had the gift of speech, "and I am about to lay my bones down forever. But do not be troubled on that account, master dear. It is no grief for me to lay down my tired bones.

"And now that I am at the end of life's tether I have come to know things that you, my master, should know. The Hag of the Deep Wood has been busy and she has plotted ways to separate Valentine and Golden Hood or to separate you and Valentine.

"As you three go into the city in the morning's dawn you will be met by a welcoming cavalcade. A groom will lead up a high roan horse for Valentine to ride on. But if he mounts upon this horse it will bear him away, and thus he and Golden Hood will be separated. You must kill this roan horse before Valentine mounts it. Snatch the sword out of his belt and plunge it into the horse. If you do this Valen-

tine will be saved. But you must never tell any one why you killed the horse. If you do you will turn into stone from your feet up to your knees."

"Alas, alas!" said John Ball.

"But even then the peril made by the hag's plotting will not be past. She will strive to take Golden Hood from Valentine. When you go into the bride's chamber in the palace you will see the bridal dress upon the couch. All woven of gold it will seem. Golden Hood will put out her hands to take it up and put it around her. If she does the dress will turn into pitch and brimstone and burn her to death. But if you will seize the dress before she puts her hands on it and fling it into the fire no harm will come to her."

"I will do it," said John Ball.

"You must not tell any one why you have burned the bridal dress. If you do you will change from your knees to your heart into stone."

"Alas, alas!" said John Ball.

"But still Valentine and Golden Hood will not be left safely with each other: one more danger awaits them. After their marriage there will be a wedding ball. In the middle of the dance Golden Hood will become pale, and she will draw out of the dance. There will be poison upon her lips and if it stays there for a while she will die. But if one comes forward and kisses the poison off her lips she will live, and the last peril will be passed."

"I will kiss the poison off her lips," said John Ball.

"But you must not tell any one why you have kissed the lips of the bride. If you do you will turn into stone from the toes of your feet to the crown of your head."

"Alas, alas!" said John Ball.

He looked over to where Golden Hood was bending above Valentine, and he thought that he would take all the risks of turning into stone rather than that they two should be separated.

Then Baldwin, having told him of the three perils, went away slowly. John Ball saw the old horse stretch himself upon the ground. He did not go to him, for he knew that Baldwin wanted to be alone, but he watched and watched him, and the tears flowed down from his eyes.

He brought Valentine and Golden Hood to where the horse lay. Baldwin was dead. The two youths dug a grave and buried him and set a mark above the grave. And Golden Hood wept over Baldwin.

They went toward the city. The bells rang out new peals. At the city gate a cavalcade was drawn up to welcome Valentine, the Emperor's son, who had been given up as lost.

As they came up to the gate a groom led out a high roan horse for Valentine to mount on. Valentine put his foot into the silver stirrup. As he did John Ball snatched the sword from Valentine's hand and plunged it into the horse's side. The horse gave a scream and fell down.

Then the grooms turned upon John Ball and

reproved him for slaying the horse that was to bear through the city the Emperor's son. Valentine's face was pale from his disappointment, for he was fain to ride upon that high roan horse, but he stood by John Ball's side and he said: "What has been done has been well done, for it has been done by my friend and my rescuer."

A black horse was brought and Valentine mounted it; Golden Hood was given a white jennet and she and Valentine rode together. John Ball went with the cavalcade, and they came at a good time to the Emperor's palace.

On the steps of the palace, with the golden diadem upon his head, and with his long beard falling down, the wise Emperor stood. He embraced his son; he welcomed Golden Hood by kissing her on the forehead, and he received John Ball by taking his hand and pressing it in his own two hands. They sat down at the Emperor's table and they ate the best of cakes.

Then the Emperor drew out his little golden

key and he told them he would bring them to the bride's chamber. He opened the white door and he showed them all the lovely things that were there—all presents for the bride. And on the couch there was a wedding dress; it was woven of gold threads and it had silver spangles upon it. And all golden as it was, it was woven so finely that, as the airs blew upon it, it fluttered here and there.

Golden Hood uttered a cry of gladness and went to lift the dress up off the couch. As she did John Ball snatched it up. He threw the dress upon the flames of the fire, and it went up the chimney in a blaze.

Golden Hood turned upon him with a cry; Valentine took a step near him in anger; the grooms of the chamber begged the Emperor to let them handle him for this second misdemeanor. But the wise Emperor made no sign. Then Valentine said: "Whatever has been done has been well done, for it has been done by my friend and my rescuer, John Ball." And saying

that, Valentine turned on his heel and went out of the chamber.

Quickly a new dress of silk was woven for the bride; quickly the dress was fitted and fixed, and lovely indeed did Golden Hood look in it; she had white flowers in her dark hair, and she wore a red Indian shawl across her white dress.

Valentine and she were married in the clear glass chamber of the palace. Then a great ball was given in the colored glass chamber, and the wise Emperor himself led Golden Hood in.

She would dance the first dance with no one but John Ball. He led her into the center of the colored glass chamber; the musicians began to play and he clasped her hand and put his arm around her. Golden Hood was smiling as the dance began; the whole happiness of the world seemed to stream in through the colored glass of the chamber and leave rays around her head. Gladness lit up her face as she began the dance with John Ball.

But her face became pale as death. She

stopped in the dance and she drew herself from the dancers. But before she drew away John Ball saw what was on her lips—something redder than her lips' redness.

He went to where she stood. He was beside her before Valentine. He kissed her on the lips, and the redness that was above their redness was taken off on his lips. Then he turned around and he saw all the courtiers standing there with scoffing eyes.

Then Valentine was standing facing him. "John Ball," he said, "you slew my horse and you burned the dress that my father would have given my bride. And now you have kissed her on the lips before all the courtiers as if she, and you, and I, all had one tie between us. You have made my bride seem mean in the eyes of all here. John Ball, John Ball, we were three together for a long while, but now I do not know what thoughts you had of Golden Hood all the time we three were together. I do not know you, John Ball. Take gold and silver for the help

you have given me and go from this palace and from my father's city."

John Ball could not bear that Valentine should say this to him and that the comradeship they had together should seem a clouded and doubtful thing. He told Valentine all that Baldwin had told him. He told him why he had slain the roan horse, and he became stone from the toes of his feet to his knees. He told him why he had burned the bridal dress, and he became stone from his knees to his heart. And then he told him why he had kissed the lips of the bride, and he became stone from the toes of his feet to the crown of his head. All in stone he stood in the chamber of colored glass, and for a while nothing was heard there except the clock ticking and Golden Hood weeping.

And now that he knew that John Ball had been true in everything a heaviness came over Valentine's heart as if it had been turned to stone, and he knew that that heaviness would be there until he saw his faithful friend in flesh

and blood again. The wedding ball was over now. Out of the chamber of colored glass they bore John Ball. By order of the wise Emperor they left him by Valentine's bed.

THE END OF THE STORY

FOR long and long thereafter Valentine went traveling through the world seeking counsel from sages and magians as to how John Ball might be transformed from stone into his own flesh and blood. Far and far he went and long and long he was away; many a sage and many a magian he talked with, but no one could tell him how his friend might be restored.

At long last he turned back to his father's city, his heart heavy with the hopeless thing he had to tell. But still his heart, heavy as it was,

was straining within him at the thought of seeing his wife Golden Hood and the little child that had been born to him and to her.

He came to his father's city again, and with great rejoicings he was brought to the palace. His father, the Emperor, was in the hall of the embassies. After Valentine looked on Golden Hood and the little child sleeping, he went to where his father was.

And then he saw the embassy that had come to his father. From the great Prester John it had come. And in the embassy, all dressed in golden coats, were many of the children who had followed the Piper out of the Wood of Daylight-Gone.

Tom-Tom, the Piper's son, was there; he was now chief over all the King's bandsmen; Jack Snipe, Jack Sprat, and Jack Horner, who fed the King's purple fishes, were there, and Robin and Richard and Nancy who had charge of the whole muster of peacocks. All was well with the rest of the children. They thought that

Prester John's kingdom was the grandest place in the world to be in.

They had been sent to the Emperor with presents of flowering orange trees out of Prester John's Indian garden. Also they brought a word of counsel to Valentine and his father.

For Prester John had heard of Valentine's friend being turned into stone; he consulted the magians who were at his court about it—the magians who were the best in the world. The magians bade Prester John tell the Emperor and tell Valentine that the one thing that might turn a man of stone into a man of flesh and blood was the touch of a hand of a child.

Valentine was overjoyed to get that word. Maybe the touch of those who had been with him in the Wood of Daylight-Gone might awaken John Ball? But no—the children who had gone with the Piper into the country of Prester John had grown to be youths and maidens. They touched the stone but it remained stone under their hands.

Then those who had been with Valentine and John Ball in the Wood of Daylight-Gone took out of their pouches the present that Silvanus had given them—the nuts that opened with a hinge and that held the little birds. The birds perched on their finger nails and sang. They brought them near John Ball. On the fingers of his stony hand the little birds perched, but their singing did not awaken him.

The wise Emperor had gone into the nursing chamber. When he came into the hall he carried in his arms the little child that had been born to Valentine and Golden Hood. He set the child upon the floor. It crawled to the man of stone. It stretched out a hand and touched him. Golden Hood, who had come into the hall, and Valentine watched the child, and they were both upon their knees.

The feet of stone moved, as far as to the knees. Golden Hood lifted up the child and the child touched the man above the knees. He moved from the knees up to the middle of the

body. Valentine lifted the child and it touched the man above the heart. John Ball moved, John Ball breathed, and John Ball spoke.

Then Valentine took the wooden cups that had always been left beside the man of stone and he filled them with wine and he put one of the cups in John Ball's hand. John Ball looked at the cup in his hand, and he looked at the cup that Valentine held. He raised it and he drank the wine. Then Valentine took him in his arms, and they wept tears over each other.

Those who had come from Prester John's country went back with the thanks of the Emperor, and with presents for themselves. And, that John Ball and Valentine might remember them, they left with them the nuts that opened on a hinge and the little birds that perched upon finger nails and sang.

Valentine became Emperor after his father, and his faithful councillor was no one other than John Ball. And Golden Hood who had gone through the Dark Forest and who had stayed in

the nest of the eagles became more and more known for her beauty. They lived happily ever afterward, and the story of the other Children Who Followed the Piper was no less happy than was theirs.

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